

THE AFRICAN PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTION OF PERSONAL NAMING AMONG THE SHONA SPEAKING PEOPLE OF ZIMBABWE

by

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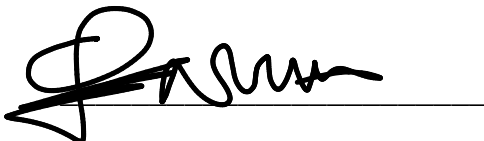
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31 January 2021

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Title of the dissertation: The African philosophical conception of personal naming among the Shona speaking people of Zimbabwe

Key terms: African; Afro-English; Conception; Names; Naming; Personal; Philosophy; Shona; Tradition; Western

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my children; Clergy, Cleric, Clyde, Clerisy, Creed, Creedal, Classic and Champ.

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Preface

I was born and given the name Crymore. A literal construal of this name would suggest that this is an unpleasant name. Accordingly, it appears that I am a victim of naming mistakes. It was on 27 July 2017, at 09h30, when I was enjoying being a trucker, at Skilpadshek border post, on my way to Namibia via Botswana, when a customs official (SARS), by the name Victor, asked for my name? And I replied, *Crymore*. He then went on asking for the meaning of my name, of which I told him. Interestingly, he narrated his story about his father's name, *Gontse*. *Gontse* is a Tswana name, literally meaning 'enough' in English. According to his explanation, his father was named circumstantially and purposefully. It looks that we had an identical naming situation, as it was the case with my name. I realised that naming was not a mere practice but a mechanism to solve people's problems. With the quest to find the philosophy underlying the two names, I came up with a topic formulation, **"The African philosophical conception of personal naming among the Shona speaking people of Zimbabwe"**. The topic demanded a massive interrogation, which I found out to be the following research.

Abstract

Personal names carry significant meaning in African cultures. The research critically argues that among the Shona speaking people of Zimbabwe, given names are not just mere tags or labels but carry and convey a significant message to the family or society of the named person. The message is often descriptive of the person named or their family. It describes the circumstances around the birth of the named or the conditions of their parents or their country and or their environment. The research further shows that names derived from socio-cultural experiences may have a plurality of meanings and also that they may be used to predict or explain something about the person named, including their parents or environment. Philosophically then, to name is to confirm, or to negate, and to confer something to the person named or to describe the circumstances of their birth.

Ngovepo (in Shona)

Mazita edungamunhu ane chirevo mutsika nemagariro evanhu vemuAfrica. Donzvo retsvakurudzo ino rinotaura nezvevanhu verudzi rweChiShona munyika yeZimbabwe, richiti mazita anopihwa vana haangova mazita chete, asi anetsanangudzo yakakosha zvikuru kumhuri kana kuti munzvimbo yaberekerwa munhu wacho, kana kuti kumuridzi wezita racho. Tsananguro yacho inotaura nezvemuridzi wezita kana kuti kumhuri yaaberekerwa. Tsananguro yacho inotsanangudza mamiriro enguva yaberekwa munhu wacho kana kuti tsika nemagariro evabereki vake kana mamiriro emunyika yaaberekwa kana kuti munzvimbo yaaberekerwa. Tsvakurudzo ino inoenderera mberi ichitaura kuti mazita evanhu anobva mutsika memagariro evanhu anoreva zvinhu zvakawanda nekuti dzimwe nguva anoshandiswa kutaura zvichauya kana kutsanangura nezvemuridzi wezita kana vabereki vake, dzimwe dzenguva nzvimbo yavanogara. Saka fungidziro inoti, kupa zita kubvumirana kana kupikisana, kana kuti kugadza chigaro pamunhu kana kuti katsanangudza mamiriro akaita nguva yaaberekwa.

Isishwankathelo (in isiXhosa)

Igama lomntu linentsingiselo enzulu kwiinkcubeko zama-Afrika. Uphando lubonisa ngokucacileyo ukuba phakathi kwabantu baseZimbabwe abantetho isisiShona, igama alinikwayo umntu asinto nje yokuphawula, koko ngumyalezo obalulekileyo omalunga nosapho okanye uluntu lwalowo uthiywa igama. Lo myalezo ula ngokuchaza ngalowo uthiywayo okanye usapho lwakhe. Kuchazwa iimeko ezingqonge ukuzalwa kwakhe okanye imeko yabazali bakhe, isizwe sakhe okanye indalo ebangqongileyo. Uphando lubonakalisa ukuba amagama asekelwe kumava enkcubeko nezentlalo anganeentsingiselo eziliqela. Ngaphaya koko, la magma asenokusetyeniziselwa ukuqikelela okanye ukucacisa okuthile malunga nalo uthiywayo, abazali bakhe okanye indalo ebangqongileyo. Ngokwefilosofi ke ngoko, ukuthiya igama kukungqina okanye kukuphikisa, kukubethelela inyaniso ethile ngomntu othiywa igama, ikwakukuchaza iimeko zokuzalwa kwakhe.

Chapter 1

General Introduction

1.1. Background to the study

Our natural world comprises of the human race and other species of beings. All of these beings have particular importance as living beings and participants in a functional living world. But, all are differentiated by their physical appearance, colour, size, shape, weight and many other characteristics, hence the naming of these beings makes the difference even more visible.

Naming is ontologically a requisite to human beings. But also, as shown by Sengani (2015:1) non-humans may also have names. Issah *et al* (2015:72,73) write that “a name is a compulsory universal requirement to everything”. According to the Jewish and Christian perspectives, “naming is as old as creation, as it started when God instructed Adam to name everything that God created” (Genesis Chapter 2, Verse 19-23). Naming is therefore unavoidable, and it is as old as language itself (Mateos, 2014:30). In his book, *Zulu Names*, Koopman (2002:11) claimed that “the term ‘personal names’ implies that these are names of an individual member of a family”. According to Dhlamini *et al* (2013:1725), “naming is regarded as an act of giving or bestowing an identity to an individual”. Mazama mentioned that naming means self-definition. Asante concurred, saying that naming reflects ideological and philosophical standpoints (cited in Okafor, 2014:211-212). Human beings alone, irrespective of their likeness as creatures created with the same raw materials, that is blood and flesh, and with a similar design, differs in naming traditions because of different beliefs. In Shona tradition, which is the focus of this study, there is a belief that names contribute to the personhood and the destiny of a person named.

This research will examine the construction of individual names in Shona culture thereby showing that naming is a complex process that involves assigning a position, a character and a destiny to the individual named. Thus, the research is aimed at investigating naming conceptions within the Shona culture. It will further reveal the problems that are associated with Shona or Afro-English names. Afro-English names are “*such names which are, in essence, African but rendered in English. These have been referred to as ‘Afro-English’ names as used by Second Language speakers of English in Zimbabwe. The names may be in English but have a distinct African flavour*”

such as NoPlease and Talkmore hence the term Afro-English” (Dureen & Green, 2016:61). This research will deal with the following questions: Is having a name a right? Why is a person given a specific name? Does naming have power or influence over a person named? Are Shona people patronymic or matronymic in their naming procedures? The research intends to address these critical issues and questions. It will be shown in this research that there is always a reason for choosing the name, and that the reason is always linked to the underlying meaning of the name (Koopman, 2002:20). The research will further show that there is a clear distinction between African and Western naming traditions. Finally, the research will propose solutions to some of the problems and challenges emanating from Shona naming practices.

1.2. Research Problem

Since a personal name appears to be a static connotative quality of a person named and names the person permanently, the study will investigate how names are given in Shona traditional culture and their effects on the named person and the society in which the person is inserted. This research is intended to explicate how Shona cultural naming practices as a powerful tool, contribute to the individual's personhood and destiny.

1.3. Research objectives

The study aims to investigate the human phenomenon of personal naming in African Shona philosophical thought. Through this investigation I wish to attempt to answer the following research questions:

Does a name shape a person?

How are names constructed?

What is the purpose of naming a person?

Do names bring happiness and or sadness to the named?

What is the meaning of assigning names?

Who should give a name?

What is the relationship between a name and the person named?

Can a person change a name given?

What are the effects of naming?

1.4. Rationale of the study

This research will help people to understand better naming practices within an African context, and therefore serve as an advice to people when they are naming children. From the findings of this research, people will be aware of the consequences of naming, therefore make more use of positive and constructive names so as to delimit problems that come with negative names.

1.5. Research Methodology

My research is a qualitative research design. I will follow the hermeneutic method in which I will interpret and reinterpret the vast literature available on this subject in order to clarify further what naming entails in Shona culture and how Shona or the so-called 'Afro-English' names are constructed and given to the bearers. I will make use of primary and secondary sources to collect information about acquired names. I will explain and evaluate the meanings of selected names. In addition, I will expound the circumstances that have led to the bestowal of those names. Furthermore, I will critically examine the contribution of names in creating personhood and destiny.

1.6. Literature review

I agree with different scholars of this topic that names are circumstantially given for meaningful purposes. Many argue that Shona or Afro-English names are repositories of human experiences as the name givers expose their joys, sorrows, and perceptions on life in general as well as their gratefulness to the giver of life and God (Mutema & Njanji, 2013:253). Koopman (2002:33), describing Zulu naming strategy, writes that a name is a public statement. Naming among the Ndebele is like a statement that should be addressing a particular subject (Dhlamini *et al.*, 2013:1726). According to Tonkin, "names are seen as personal facts that express aspirations as well as social and organisational control" (in Sengani, 2015:2). Neethling believes that "parents or guardians bestow a personal name on a child that has social and cultural relevance and meaning" (cited in Ngubane & Thabethe, 2013:1). Sengani (2015:3) also finds that "naming reminds people of what happened, or what is happening or what might happen in the future". According to Uzo, "a name is seen as a promise containing a list of expectations" (cited in Manyarara & Gora, 2015:35). "Most of the sampled African names are ideas concerning certain life issues that the namers put across" (Mutema & Njanji, 2013:253). Positive or constructive names therefore, come with a

lucrative package, that is good luck, respect, and love, unlike negative names that may be seen as ushering in problems. Issah *et al* (2015:73,74) quoted a Yoruba's saying that a "good name is more precious than gold and silver" and an Akan one that expresses that "a name is not just given to a person, but rather there are some important factors that are considered first". The Basotho people believes that a "bad name is ominous". Agyekum (2006:209) identifies that "names are important indicators of people's behaviour and ways of life". Tempels finds that in African philosophy, "name express the individual character of the being. The name is not a simple external courtesy; it is the very reality of the individual" (in Coetzee & Roux, 2003:214). Mutema & Njanji (2013:251) states that "in Shona traditional thought, destiny originate from a name given at birth". Mapara *et al* found that "some people's character traits are captured in the names they carry" (cited in Mutema & Njanji, 2013:253).

According to Arna, "in Southern Africa, naming seems to be a strong ideological tool, where names give loyalty, esteem and show respect to ancestors and show religious values that are inherent in each society" (in Moyo, 2012:15). Neethling wrote that "name meaningfulness continues to differentiate the naming patterns in African societies from Western naming practices" (cited in Ngubane & Thabethe, 2003:1). "The African naming strategy is both rational and emotional because naming is regarded as logically premeditated with a contextual story telling strategy like a war name" (Pfukwa & Barnes, 2010:9). For example, "the name 'Chimurenga' in Chimurenga street (Bulawayo) evokes sentiments of Zimbabwe's nationalist struggle for independence; or the name 'Mzilikazi' in Mzilikazi road, make reference to the founding father of the Ndebele nation, King Mzilikazi" (cited in Moji, 2015:7). Agyekum (2006:208) believes that "Western names are predictable whereas African names are not generally predictable, for until a child is born and under what circumstances it is born, the name cannot be determined with accuracy". In Shona, the power of names and naming is ingrained traditionally for social bondage and usage. African names are of great concern because they preach a vital message to the public. Thus, names have what Ziff calls "information content" (cited in Sengani, 2015:3). In this regard, a name carries double weight, namely (1) for identification, and (2) for conveying meaningful attributes of the bearer. In this case, Zawawi writes that "a name constructs a person because the name one bears may create an attitude in those who hear it before they meet the name bearer" (cited in Agyekum, 2006:208). Magudu *et al*

(2014:74) agreed, stressing that psychologically, “a name create a certain mindset”. De Klerk & Bosch are of the view that “personal names provide unique details and circumstances surrounding the birth of a child” (in Moyo, 2012:12). That is why, Suzman notes that, “traditionally, personal names were unique and meaningful, emerging from circumstances at the time of birth of a child” (cited in Ngubane & Thabethe, 2013:1). Ladzekpo found that, “historically African people of all persuasions can identify and recount past events by naming children in accordance with the event or circumstances at the time of birth” (cited in Dhlamini *et al.*, 2013:1726). Naming is a subject matter, because a name is what may be called a headline with the story being the human characteristics. Without a name, a person is nothing metaphysically and ontologically. This has also been shown by Martin who argues that “to name is to confer a form of life” (cited in Mungwini, 2011:4).

I am of the view that there are gaps in the past research of this topic. For instance, the neglect of the significance of names in the shaping of personalities, is very clear in Menkiti’s (1984) account of personhood among the African people. Agyekum (2006) citing the Akan people, conceded and recognised the contribution of names in shaping personhood. Berglund labours the same point when he argues that “the name *is* that person. They are the same, the name and the person. It is the word whereby that person is known. That is the name. So, the person and the name are one. Umthakathi kills a man by combining the words of death with the name. He throws (ukophonsa) these at the man and they kill him” (cited in Koopman, 2002:17). Names define the bearers. “They describe the character and attributes of a person, a clan or a nation” (Magudu *et al*, 2014:74). Further, scholars of this topic, especially in Zimbabwe, did not peruse deeply into Shona conception of personal naming, and hence did not provide concrete solutions to naming problems. For example, Mungwini (2011) focused much on place names and Pfukwa & Barnes (2010) looked at war names. A few others concentrated much on the reasons (determining factors) of personal names, but shallowly looked at the naming conceptions and the dangers of bad naming. Apparently, they neglected to give genuine solutions to naming problems. For instance, telling people to stop; anointing children with names of relatives or friends (name saking) whether dead or alive, giving names that define bad situations (past or present circumstances and future negative wishes or promises). They only provided what I term alternativism, loosely translated as rescue opportunities, in the form of

renaming and rituals. But these are not automatic warrants to rescue the given. Dambudzo (problem) has been renamed to Emmerson, that is from a bad meaning African Shona name to a meaningless Western name. In post-independence, renaming has promoted the continuity of colonial ills and threaten the restitution of African identity. Renaming rituals depend on the performance of the practitioner, cannot guarantee success. I am quite convinced that naming trends in Africa, needs transformational look.

In my view, solutions to bad naming are possible. I therefore propose the need for a change of naming patterns and conceptions during naming ceremonies. Western brands and old names must be replaced not repeated. Names must be meaningful but neutrally good. According to Makoni *et al* (2007:437), “naming is susceptible to change, depending on times”. According to Moyo (2012:12), “naming is the prerogative of the elderly in African tradition. Even Arno noted the same that, in many communities, naming children has always been the prerogative of the elders” (cited in Sengani: 2015:2). But I am in support of Sengani (2015:1) that there is power struggle with the system, citing disagreements between old and young generations, noting that all are in a position of excising their authority, which might disadvantage the child to be named. “So, to avoid bad names like ‘Regret’, it is advisable for parents to go through a lengthy process when considering suitable names for their children, because these are not cruel nicknames, these are names of real-life people” (News 24. 2018/08/16,10:58am).

In conclusion, the errors of naming might exist eternally because it is at a personal level, where one cannot be told the choice of names and naming conceptions. On top of that, it is difficult for authorities to enact laws that regulate naming patterns and conceptions. Of course, after this research, there will be awareness to enlighten the people about wrong choices in child naming. But the challenges are that the news might not reach all the people due to illiteracy and lack of availability of information systems, mostly in remote areas where this tradition is mainly practiced. As a result of ignorance and the preservation of culture, the news might reach deaf ears.

1.7. Schematic outline of the dissertation

My dissertation is made up of seven chapters.

Chapter 1: General introduction

This chapter introduces the study. The chapter shows the rationale of the study. Furthermore, the chapter shows methodological framework applied on this study.

Chapter 2: Anthroponymy: Philosophical discourse

The purpose of this chapter is to show the origins of names and the importance of naming in general. The chapter argues that naming is a universal practice compulsory to all races.

Chapter 3: Western naming tradition and its influence on African naming tradition

This chapter discusses about Western naming tradition and show why it is different from other cultures like African tradition. The chapter explains the factors considered by Western people during childbirth. In addition, the chapter shows how Africans adopted Western names and the birth of Afro-English names.

Chapter 4: African philosophical conception of personal naming

This chapter is the epicentre of this research. The chapter will explain various conceptions of personal naming during childbirth, particularly from the Shona speaking people of Zimbabwe.

Chapter 5: Philosophical discourse of Shona personal names

In this chapter, different names and different reasons are classified to show that naming in African tradition is determined and influenced by a plurality of causes. Some includes emotions, defining circumstances, desired characters and historical events.

Chapter 6: Functionality and effectiveness of Shona personal names

This chapter is intended to reflect on the functions of Shona personal names. Furthermore, the chapter shows the effects of names on the persons named.

Chapter 7: Critical interpretation of the discussion

This chapter is an attempt to bring solutions to naming problems and challenges. The chapter discourages negative naming and encourages positive naming.

General Conclusion

Bibliography

Chapter 2

Anthroponymy: Philosophical discourse

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the advent and origin of personal names, and the importance of naming in general. All beings, humans or non-humans, visible or invisible, beings that existed in the past or are presently existing had an opportunity to be named. In the case of human beings, even those that are born under questionable or undesirable circumstances they will still be named. This is precisely for the reason that naming is a significant process in the human culture. This chapter seeks to underline the philosophical significance of naming. The point of departure of this study is that all earthly beings, whether natural or artificial must be known as something, according to human culture. This view is supported even by the biblical tradition on naming which is exemplified in the claim that God instructed Adam (the first human being) to name everything (Genesis 2:19-20). In light of this, the chapter will show the power of naming in general.

2.2. Philosophical discourse of naming

What is discourse? According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, discourse is among others, a formal and orderly and usually extended expression of thought on a subject (<http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/discourse>). But discourse is not simply what is said about a certain topic, or the ideas that people have about a particular subject. According to the Dictionary of Critical theory, discourse can be understood as “[a] specific form of language use shaped and determined by situational rules and context ...” (Buchanan, 2010). This means that discourse carries power – those who control the discourse, control what people believe about those subjects. However, the discourse I wish to develop in this study is on anthroponyms. Anthroponymy (or anthroponomastics) following the etymology of the word ‘anthroponym’ which means ‘human name,’ is the study of the names of human beings (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthroponymy>). Thus, the research will discuss philosophically human names and naming practices among the Shona-speaking

people of Zimbabwe. My point of departure is clearly explained by Sengani (2015:1) that “every human being, as well as any objects, is associated with a name”.

2.2.1. Names and naming in general

What is a name? Koopman (2002:8) throws some light on the question when he writes that “names are nouns, that is linguistic units. Names are linguistic units which operate within a social context”. To paraphrase this, Issal *et al* (2015:74) writes that “technically, a name is a noun, a noun is a name of any person, place, animal or thing”. This is descriptive of proper names. To put it clearer, according to the Chamber Dictionary, a “name is a word or words by which an individual person, place or thing is identified, it is the nomenclature used in making reference to all things, tangible or intangible, living or non-living, concrete or abstract, liquid or solid” (cited in Issah *et al.*, 2015:72). For obvious reasons, the logic is transparent as it means that a name is a compulsory necessity to all living and non-living things. To demonstrate the vitality and essentiality of names, Searle cited in Ngidi (2012:83) argues that:

A necessary condition of a speaker’s intention to refer to a particular object or a person in the utterance of an expression, is the speaker’s ability to provide an identifying description of that object. For the hearer to identify whatever the speaker is referring to the speaker’s utterance, must either be or be supplemented by an identifying description.

Names are at the core of earthly life. They are prerequisites of all earthly objects. Names are instruments to separate objects, both natural and artificial. By naming you are separating one object from another. Objects can be similar, but when they are named, they become independent and dissimilar in terms of identification despite their close appearance and proximity. Explaining the significance of names, Zabeeh cited in Mateos (2014:36) notes that:

Not only can there be no histories, geographies, novels, myths and so on, but more basically, there can be no family relations, tribal institutions or political organisations, even at the most primitive level without the existence of some linguistic expressions by means of which significant persons, places, times and objects are uniquely identified and referred to.

Names serves a variety of purposes. In many philosophical discourses, there are four theories of names, namely:

1. Sense based theory of names: Gottlob Frege, the German philosopher, takes the view that “elsewhere, names contribute the object for which they stand to the truth-conditions of sentences in which they occur; why should they, in this one case, stand not for an object but for themselves?” (cited in Speaks, 2011:2). According to this theory, for every name, there must be a corresponding object out there in the world to which it represents truthfully and accurately. Frege believes that “names must have some property, other than their reference, which explains these facts about cognitive significance. This property is their sense. Sense is what explains the difference in cognitive value” (cited in Speaks, 2011:3). It therefore appears that Frege conceded to the sense that names have dual representation, that is, standing for themselves and for the objects.

2. Descriptivist theory of names: In Bertrand Russell and Gottlob Frege’s terms, “is the view that the meaning or semantic content of a proper name is identical to the descriptions associated with it by speakers, while their referents are determined to be the objects that satisfy these descriptions”. For example, “for every proper name p , there is some collection of descriptions D associated with p that constitute the meaning of p ” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Descriptivist_theory_of_names). The theory holds that each name is a collection of descriptions and takes that which it names (the referent) as the thing that satisfies all or most of those descriptions (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Descriptivist_theory_of_names). In simple terms, the name *Tagarika Penzura* means everything that is associated with him.

3. Causal theory of names: This theory became popular in the 1970’s under the influence of Saul Kripke and Keith Donnellan (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Causal_theory_of_reference). According to this theory a name becomes an exact signifier of the object it is referring to. Kripke for instance, argued that “proper names are not abbreviations of definite descriptions but rigid designators” of referents (cited in Pavel, 1979:181). Pavel (1979:181) corroborates this when he states that “a being is given a name which refers to him, even if his set (cluster) of properties is unknown, variable or different from what one believes it is”. In other words, the name and its bearer have a strong relationship. The relationship is further reflected by corresponding information that perfectly and honestly describe the bearer.

4. Direct reference theory of names: This is a theory of language that claims that the meaning of a word or expression lies in what it points out in the world. The object denoted by such a word is called its referent

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_reference_theory). According to John Stuart Mill, “names are just meaningless ‘marks’ whose purpose is not to convey information but simply to allow objects to become subjects of discourse” (cited in Kroon, 2004:553). Mill argues that names are mere signals that directly point out to an object and serve nothing more than that.

Basically, a name signifies a being of the past, present and future by its very essence. If for example, philosophy and its sub-discipline metaphysics are etymologically first and second subjects, respectively, a name is prior in discovery and existence. The fact that both subjects were named, thus a name is prior to their existence. Accordingly, prior, their functionality, people and objects are conferred and confirmed on the day they are named. Names give them approval for existence. As Mateos (2014:29) observes “we could even describe ourselves as *homo nominus*, since naming anything new that we come across lies at the core of our existence and survival”. A name fundamentally functions like an ‘introduction’ in an essay. Names describe and, in some instances, predict the life or circumstances of the person named. They introduce and tag the being that they name. One of the roles play by personal names is the ordering and structuring of the world around us. Hagstrom elaborates further:

It is with the help of names that we can create order and also structure our conception of the world, that is, it is through names that we can classify and arrange our environment by separating it into named categories and filling the categories with named components (cited in Chabata, 2012:46).

Names help us to distinguish one thing, one place or person from the other. A case in point is geographical names. Payne claimed that “geographical names are of intrinsic interest because they are necessary for spatial reference in an otherwise confusing and often unintelligible landscape” (cited in Chabata, 2012:46). The same idea is also seen in Finch who writes that “a person’s full name marks her/him as a unique individual, but at the same time, it also gives some indication of her/his location in the various social worlds which she/he inhabits” (cited in Mateos, 2014:81).

Etymologically, from a Christian perspective, naming originated from the Bible when God asked Adam to name plants and animals. The Bible states that:

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them; and whatever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of their air, and to every beast of the field (Online Bible, Holy Bible, Genesis 2, verse 19-20).

According to Christian tradition since then, up to now, naming has been an ongoing practice and it seems it will last eternally. But what does naming do? Naming simply confirms existence of the named objects. That is why “they are virtually no known phenomena without specific name(s), it is only unknown phenomena that their names are not known to humans” (Issah *et al.*, 2015:74). As Martin puts it, “to name is to confer a form of life” (cited in Mungwini, 2011:4). If something exists, it means it is known. Names bring form to objects. Naming is translated as a way of formalising existence of objects. It is a formal permission given to all objects to exist. It is a ratification of liveliness. Once a being assumes that formal permission, then it is known. Barnes & Pfukwa (2010:214) argued that “by naming a thing we make it knowable”. Since all objects have natural right to be known, Mungwini (2011:4) explains that “naming involves assigning a word or phrase to a particular object or property. The purpose is to identify, to distinguish and classify our objects of experience”. Naming, thus, become a necessary condition of objectification. I now turn to personal names.

2.2.2. Personal names

According to Koopman (2002:10), “there are number of different types of names given to human beings, the most common being personal name, the nickname and the surname”. The personal name unlike the nickname is given mostly at birth and it is a formal notice of birth that is officially recorded spiritually and on government register. This cannot be the case with nicknames. Although a surname is also recorded spiritually and on governments records, the personal name is more important because it individuates a person. Alford (1988:141-2) argued that:

The use of an individual’s first name and surname suggests: “I am an individual in a kin group”, the use of a first name alone suggests: “I am an individual, my kin group is irrelevant”. The use of first name symbolises personal identity, while the use of surnames symbolises

public identity.

Makoni *et al* (2007:449) expounded that “because people belonging to the same clan share a surname, personal names are important for purposes of identity marking”. It is “because of this problem of identification, a system of fully hereditary surnames was gradually introduced in Europe, evolving from the early medieval patronymic traditions” (Mateos, 2014:31). However, the problem of the use of personal names alone, is that many people may share the same name. In that situation, surnames are used to assist to identify a particular person. It may be helpful to understand what the surname is because it is closely related to a name, although it is of little importance in this study.

As already alluded, personal names are identity-making. Personal names give individual identity to human beings. They personify human beings, among others. Significantly, all humans are so to say, personal, or simply put, to be human is to be personal. ‘Personal’ signifies individuality. ‘Personal’ comes from the word person. From a common understanding of the English language, a person means a human being. However, the African conception of personhood would problematise this view. In this conception it is believed that personhood is an attribute that is achievable by human beings through moral excellence. Wiredu (2009:15), quoting Kaunda, finds that “to be called a person is to be commended” as one would have achieved a status of being a complete member of the community. The Shona people often say “*munhu hunhu*” (morality is personhood). A name is therefore something that is attached to that human being at birth for consideration and recognition. Thus, a name becomes a personal belonging. By naming, you are connecting or attaching a human being to a name tag. This prompted Adeyemi & Oladuulaye to concede that “names are social emblem designed for and attached to every human irrespective of his/her creed, sex, ethnic affiliation, nationality or his/her cultural characteristics” (cited in Issah *et al.*, 2015:75). A question to ponder may be, who is important between the name and the person named? To answer this question, we must evoke the unifying structure of epistemology and ontology. The former carries the essence of knowing and the latter carries the essence of existence, but both intersect in the essence of a ‘known being’. To compare the importance of the two (the name and its referent) is like to compare the country and its people, by asking which one is best. The two must coexist. The Shona people believe that, the name carries value while the human carries essence. To argue for the separation is to seek the impossibility to be possible. Absenteeism of

the former automatically makes the presence of the latter impossible, and vice versa. A personal name is something which represents that person to others. Something that confirms one's being. Ngidi (2012:95) conceded that "the name bearer becomes known by that which he/she is called". It is therefore logical to conclude that only humans have the privilege to name other objects. I suppose, the power of human beings to name other objects is linked to the Christian and Jewish perspective, as we have already discussed, wherein it is believed that the Creator of the universe instructed the first human being (Adam) to name all the created things (Genesis 2, verse 19-20). The biblical text above supports the view that naming is as old as creation. Adam was human, and thus, the power to name seems to be invested with human beings in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Personal names are synonymously used as first names, or given names, or even Christian names (in Christian religion). Koopman (2002:10) is emphatic on this as he further clarifies:

The terms 'first name' and 'forename' refer to the custom of placing these names before the surname. The term 'Christian name' is often misleading, and even offensive, as when persons of the Jewish or Muslim faiths are required to complete a form which asks for their Christian names. The term 'given name' refers to the fact that names such as John and Bongikhosi are given to the child by the parents, as opposed to the surname, which is automatically inherited" (Koopman, 2002:11).

The terms above are defined as equivalents identifiers of a person. Names like Crymore, Theresa, Isabel, *Mazvita*, Clergy, Cleric, Clerisy, Clyde, Creed, Creedal, *Sibusisiwe*, Ezekiel and so on, are identifying signals that point out to a specific person. Mateos (2014:39) is of the view that "forenames (also known in English as first names, given names or Christian names), which refer to the proper name given to a person, usually at birth" welcome a person into the world. At birth, human beings are given names that will accompany them in this journey of life. Given names are bestowed in different languages. Generally, the choice of name depends on the language of the nation, particularly, the mother language of the name giver. Language is an agent that gives a name colour and sound, so to say, plus a secondary identity which is a group or nation identity. It is a linguistic signal that brings sense to human interaction. It is in a certain language that a name is given. Mateos (2014:29) concurs, arguing that "language above anything else is what truly makes us human". The world could not

have come true if there was no language. It is language that promotes communication and to communicate requires the usage of names, because communication without names is impossible and even more impossible without language. Mateos (2014:30) observes that “the practice of assigning a life-long forename or some sort of permanent nickname to identify individuals is as old as language itself”. Where there is a name there is language. This underlines the significance of language. Mateos (2014:29) further stated that “the practice of naming ourselves has probably been with us since the early development of language”. “Thus, naming is as old as creation itself” (Mutema & Njanji, 2013:251). Creation, language and naming have a workable relationship that makes it difficult for one of these three to exist independently. The triad is united and any singularity of it is unproductive.

The importance of naming a person underscored by Lucile Hoerr Charles when he observes that “naming gives one existence, makes him part of the world of men” (cited in Alford, 1988:29). A name is an expensive brand that is freely given to all humans. It is expensive in terms of its usage. This is best explained by Lucile Hoerr Charles, cited in Alford (1988:1) that “naming, having a word for it, is an important part of the process of evolving consciousness. Naming a person isolates and defines one soul, one individual, one unit in the stream of the whole”. Without a name, one is not located in being. You are neither something nor somewhere. To be human is to be something somewhere, that is, to be a being located in space and time. Conversely, to be something somewhere, one needs to have a name. The ‘something somewhere’ is translated as the community of beings. As Mbiti posits, “to be human is to belong to the whole community and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the community” (cited in Ngidi, 2012:169-170). Humans exist with others. The fact that you are human or an object, automatically qualifies you to have a name. “Naming can be considered as a universal cultural practice. Every society in the world gives names as tags to its people, but how the names are given, the practices and rituals involved, and interpretations attached to the names, differ from society to society and from one culture to another” (Agyekum, 2006:211). This put the “human class” into a “social class”. The “social class” prioritise names as predeterminers of existence. Thus, all beings have identifying signals in the form of a name. The rationality of giving names signifies the sameness among humans, neutralising the logic of superiority and inferiority. In order to underline this equality of

human beings, Alford (1988:118) maintains that “naming and names feature in a social context. The use of personal names is a sign of (or an invitation to) intimacy and or equality”. Philosophically then, “personal names are considered to be “cultural universals” or “human universals”, defined as a list of common traits present in all cultures” (Brown & Murdock, cited in Mateos, 2014:36).

Mungwini (2011:4) claimed that “the practice of naming, therefore, is an important step in the process of distinguishing and creating identity”. Alford (1988:36) argues the same when he maintains that “to name a child is to help shape that child’s identity”. To add weight on that, Dhlamini *et al* (2013:1725) averred that “this is an identity that they would carry throughout their lifetime”. Names make human life simple, since it is a signal to identify and direct human beings and their activities. It is that identity that makes you different from anybody. It is you and only you with that identity and there will never be another you. Since life is a once off opportunity. There is no repeat or another chance and never will it be reversible. Ngidi (2012:90-1) agrees that “the name differentiates the child from others, thus, the society will be able to treat and deal with the child as someone with needs and feelings different from those of other people”. Even namesaking or repetition of a name to another person, will never represent the first referent of the name. According to Whitaker, cited in Alford (1988:68), “the differentiation of individuals, however, is generally thought to be the central function on naming”.

Furthermore, “names are purely referential” (Rey, cited in Agyekum, 2006:207). Lyons added that “to humans, the name is important for its referential function, since it draws the hearer’s attention to the existence and relevance of the named person, thus affirming his being” (cited in Dickens, 1985:24). The Shona people believe that, a name exists forever, giving reference to that particular individual despite the passing of the body. In a narrower sense, it appears that the notion of eternity is construed in this understanding. The continued existence of the name after the passing of the bearer might suggest that somewhere somehow, the bearer still exist somewhere. Metaphysically, from an African point of view, the existence of the name alone and the belief that its original bearer exists somewhere, points out exactly to the presence of African ancestors. In African spirituality, a name and its bearer cannot die permanently, although it can fade from people’s mouth. A person might cease to exist visibly but exist invisibly in the spiritual world. This points to life after death. That is

why a name does not disappear permanently. Both the family and the government will keep the name of the deceased person in their archives. In many African families, the family will probably do it through different types of ceremonies and the government through the issuance of the death certificate. Thus, a name seems to have eternal existence. Its static quality gives it eternal existence, despite the transit of the material (body). According to Shona people, the immaterial (soul) is believed to have eternal existence too. Now, it appears like all immaterial or invisible things are blessed with eternal existence. Perhaps, because they do not occupy space, therefore difficult to be affected or attacked, thus they cannot be sick, injured or killed, and hence there is no reason for them to die.

Naming in its general sense is legacy creation. The objective of naming is continuity. Once you name, you are perpetuating existence of the World. Each named object contributes to the existence of the World. By naming, you are reaching a benchmark, and thus, leaving a mark. The power to name is like the power to create. According to Mungwini (2011:5), "the power to name, just like the power to inscribe, is in and of itself a process of creating history, hence its immense significance. It symbolises the power to leave a mark that may continue beyond the life of the signifier". Bhengu (1975:52) writes:

Generally, Africans value their names. A traditional name is a religious mark of a person and human identification. It is a symbol of honour and respect for the physical environment in which human experience flourishes positively or negatively. The community uses names as instruments to build and mould the character of the younger, to fortify that of the adult and to reward that of the elder (cited in Ngidi, 2012:123).

A person is a lone being in a social matrix. The individuality and uniqueness create the aspect of being alone and qualifies a child as a social being through naming. Once a child is named, the child automatically become social. Alford (1988:30-31) argues that:

Naming is part of the process of bringing the child into the social world, inducting the once unsocialised creature into human society. Applying a name seems to be a functional equivalent to visual means of imparting the stamp of culture on the child, as well as behavioural signs of socialisation.

And there is no reason for a child to be named if a child is an isolated being. In that order, naming becomes a tool that inserts a human being into a social life. Mbiti

explained this by stating that “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am” (cited in Menkiti, 1984:171). Elias argues that “the double construction of a person’s name, through the forename plus surname formula, is part of a balance between what he terms “I – identity” and the “we – identity in human societies (individual verse collective identification)”, (cited in Mateos, 2014:38). According to “symbolic interactionism theory, humans create meaningful symbols through interactions with each other and within society” (Mead, cited in Mateos, 2014:82). Socially, it means “a name gives the name-bearer an identity and a position in the society” (Ngidi, 2012:94). Fenelon warned that “singularity is dangerous in everything” (cited in Alford, 1988:68). Society is assembled by different individuals. The significance of the human being in society is best depicted in a Shona proverb that says “*chara chimwe hachitsvanye inda*” (one finger does not crush the lies). The proverb encourages the importance of working together. It argues that a lone being cannot bring production, rather it is only the work of a collective that brings positive development. This is an emphasis for unity among societal members which is made up of the inclusion of individuals.

Martin cited in Mungwini (2011:4) argues that “names participate in the construction of social reality since to name is also to identify and therefore to assign a position”. Names have no class, they have no boundaries. Where there are people there are names for those people. People live together identify each other through given names. The world is huge, people are many, but all are named. It is those names that makes all of them known despite their enormous numbers. All human beings have social lives. Names makes the social life easy since there is need to communicate and to identify each other. Algeo aptly points out that “people are almost invariably named, indeed, a human being without a name would be socially and psychologically less than a fully man” (cited in Agyekum, 2006:208). Without a name, there is no identity. Without an identity, there is no social life. Without social life, one is not a person. “Namelessness convey this same lack of socialisation” (Alford, 1988:31). The fact that one is not named means one is not recorded, and never will be recognised. This has far reaching consequences to some societies. In Micronesia, Chuuk Lagoon state, “Truk children who are not named are buried without a ceremony accorded other Truk children” (Alford, 1988:31). If a child is not recorded and recognised, that child is not protected. The name gives immunity to every child born and named. A child without a name has no immunity for protection from malicious spirits. For that reason, it is very important

to name a child at birth to activate protection soon after birth in order to avoid or avert the misfortunes. For example, “in Mexico, Tzeltal fathers name their children early because they believe that unnamed children are in danger of losing its soul” (Alford, 1988:31). This shows that to some societies, “naming has supernatural implications” (Alford, 1988:31). Alford (1988:30) further explained that “for the child, having a name may mean inclusion in a group ritual or the protection of ancestral spirits”.

2.3. Naming practices

Humans are born and not discovered. Naming practices are different because people are different, societies are different, and values are different. Although, all persons are named, they are all named differently. Alford (1988:2) found that although “children in all societies are named, naming practices vary dramatically from society to society”. Each nation or society has got its own approach to naming. In no society are names applied randomly and unsystematical. Lawson (cited in Mateos, 2014:94) contends that “most societies have traditional naming systems that tend to be conservative”. These naming systems have evolved over generations and as a result have become culturally and socially expected. Naming is not an accidental process, it is a planned act. There are rules to be followed, and the rules are not identical. Neither will they be compulsory to every society. According to Alford (1988:14):

In some societies, name selection is entirely unconstrained, name givers can select any name they like. In other societies, name selection is somewhat constrained by prescriptive rules. And in a few societies, name selection is entirely constrained by some sort of fixed system of name choice.

Alford (*ibid*) further stated that “in some societies, the bestowal of a name is ceremonial, while in others, it occurs without ceremony. The naming practice is a systematic activity that is obliged to be carried and to comply with according to tribal doctrines. Of course, there are similarities between cultures in personal naming practices especially among African nations, but there is a sharp distinction with their Western counterpart. The two are visibly seen that they are completely different, and to liken the two amounts to categorical misappropriation. Among the Shona people, “names are means through which we recognise and understand ourselves and the world that surrounds us. Like any other society, Zimbabwe defines itself through

names” (Chabata, 2012:46). So, naming practices is an important event that defines certain people and their cultural activities. Cosmologically, cultures are what make the group different from one another, that is why we have so many tribes, cultures, nations and societies. Giddens defines culture as a phenomenon “that which consists of values the members of a given group hold, the norms they follow, and the material goods they create” (cited in Ngidi, 2012:32). For Giddens, “culture refers to the whole way of life of the members of society” (Ngidi, 2012:32). It involves things like family setups, religious beliefs, marriage customs, work patterns and so on. In all societies, naming practices is a confirmation of human creation. Human creation encompasses a lot of activities that are carried out to qualify a human to be human. Since societies are different, naming practices is a norm that is intended to welcome a new creature and letting it fit into that particular group so as to assume group identity to match others. “In many societies, it is the naming process that brings the child into social group, conferring official social membership on him or her” (Alford, 1988:14). The practices of naming simply say, for example, you are Crymore and you belong to the Shona people of Zimbabwe. Mungwini (2011:4) confirms this when he writes that “the individual or object named is situated in the order of the world, in the structures of meaning invested in by a particular collectivity”. Alford (1988:30) observes the same when he maintains that “naming a child often symbolically brings him or her into the social sphere, and naming is often accompanied by other acts with similar symbolic significance, for example, hair cutting, nail chipping or scarification”. The activities display the significance of cultural diversity. Agyekum (2006:208) concurs that “in every culture, names have cultural and social contexts that identify the bearer”.

Personal names gain an intrinsic quality when they are given to persons. Gora & Manyarara (2015:34) believes that “a name may not have much statistical significance but when anyone human being carries it, the name becomes sufficiently important, as is shown for example, in names like ‘Mistake’ or ‘*Murambiwa*’ (the rejected one)”. Unlike other creatures, human beings are of strategic importance. They are sacred. They have a holiness status that makes them absolutely great above other objects on earth. The differences in naming practices reflect different conceptions of personal naming. This makes the subject attractive and interesting to research as it provides important information about the behaviour of people when they approach the subject of naming. The differences in naming systems further show that some names are

ordinary while others are extraordinary. This distinction relies on the practice of a particular grouping. Some names are reflective of gender while others are not. For example, the Shona name *Rudo* (love), even though with its common meaning, you will never find it in males. And the opposite is true to a name like *Tongai* (rule). Some children are given single names like *Tagarika* (we are rich), while others get multitudes of names, as can be seen in the name, Seretse Khama Ian Khama (former president of Botswana).

However, despite the differences in naming practices, Alford (1988:14) noted that “naming signifies or symbolises parenthood”. Naming a child is a confirmation of having given birth, a claim that one can conceive. It indicates a self-declaration of parenthood which is tantamount to say one is a mother or a father. In many African societies, after bearing a child, the person’s membership in a society is upgraded from an ordinary to extraordinary position. For example, a meeting is called at a local school. And they say they want parents only. This necessarily means that they want people with children only. And not males or females, men or women, and or, gentlemen or ladies. It may then suggest that the position contributes to the power of decision making by those who have children at that particular school. Giving birth is not only luxurious to every human being but it comes with a package of responsibilities that must be assumed when a person is given the status of motherhood or fatherhood. There is a distinction between a mother or a father with a mere male or female. Naming adds respect to the parent of the child. In many African societies, after the naming of a child, the parent ceased to be called by his/her personal name. So, naming the child gives weight to the conceiver as he/she is transformed to another status which is called parenthood. That signifies the membership of a parent and a child in a society. Let’s say your name is Blessing, soon after conceiving, the name Blessing will automatically disappear because you will be called with your child’s name like *Amai* or *Baba Faith*. *Amai* or *Baba* loosely translated as mother or father of Faith. Most African people have similar trend, for example, Zulus they say *uBaba kaDuduzane* (father of *Duduzane*) or *uMama kaThokozile* (mother of *Thokozile*). The practice is observed to legitimise the new-born into the family and its links, and the society at large. Alford (1988:48) mentions that “the bestowal of a name on a child indicates either that the child is a legitimate member of society and or that the child’s parents are publicly claiming parenthood”. In addition to that, “the recording of the birth with the state agencies

demand the bestowal of the name and does indicate societal membership, that is, citizenship” (Alford, 1988:125).

2.4. The authority to name

The fact that any name is a ‘given name’, implies that the child gets it from someone. This means that the bearer is not in control, but someone is in control and he/she is controlling the child to be named. In naming a child, the parents are choosing his or her fate. Then, the problem with a name is that the bearer does not name him/herself. So, it is the namer’s choice to choose a word that becomes a name on behalf of the child to be named. To quote Gora & Manyara (2015:34), “the aesthetics of naming is a parent or guardian’s prerogative and expresses that individual/s wishes, joys, fears and attitudes but may not necessarily consider the named’s future perceptions or feelings engendered by the particular name that identifies them”. The power to name is vested with massive interest, that is why Alford (1988:36) claimed that “the right to name a child is an important and significant prerogative”. Because of vested interest, Suzman notes that “fathers and grandfathers were the name givers” (cited in Ngubane & Thabethe, 2013:1). Many African societies are patriarchal in nature, hence we find fathers and grandfathers as name givers mostly. The namer(s) can freely select the name without the child’s permission, neither will they consult the child nor consider itself’s feelings. Once a child is named, the name stays with the child until the child reaches a certain age where he/she might be flexible to rename if wish to do so. Lubisi (cited in Makoni *et al.*, 2007:451) argues that “naming a child is an important rite of passage in many African cultures”. The role of naming is not ordinary, but an important duty designated to people accordingly. Parents (fathers and mothers), grandparents (grandfathers and grandmothers), relatives (close or not), guardians (legal or not) and societal members are obliged to be name givers, but it all depends on the family, society or the nation in question. For example, “among the Shona people, the namers are normally parents or other family members” (Mutema & Njanji, 2013:254). But this is not always the case since there is no law governing naming practices in the country. Makoni *et al* (2007:447) found that:

Discussions with different members of the communities in Zimbabwe, indicate that naming is not confined to parents and guardians only. Anyone in the community can assign a name to any individual in

the language of the name giver's preference irrespective of its sociolinguistic status.

But Herbert & Bogatsu report that “in South Africa, Northern Sotho and Tswana, naming is confined to family members rather than extended to community members at large” (cited in Makoni *et al*, 2007:448). This sharp contrast is also noted by Suzman who maintains that there was a time when name givers were community members and not parents (cited in Moyo, 2012:12). Moyo “observes that this was varied and extensive and points to historical events and social circumstances within the larger family units” (cited in Moyo, 2012:12). This contradiction is reflective of diversity and conceptions applied in various societies. This trend does not seem uniform but depends on the ethnic groups in question. In many African cultures, elders are given due recognition in personal naming because are very skilful in their production of given names. Since most of them are illiterate, I think they are gifted with the skill in order to orally write their histories through this method. Oral history does not need archive, since it is a daily food. Arno cited in Sengani (2015:2) confirmed that, “in many communities, naming children has always been the prerogative of the elders”. Sengani articulated this claim that:

This is because they are seen to have the knowledge and skill to create or record history. As the appointed custodians of culture and heritage, they remind people of events that took place in the past and in the present, and also, project into the future.

Mushati (2013:75) provide the reason that “grandparents are respected in Zimbabwe as they provide an essential link between generations”. Probably, the reason is best described by Menkiti (1984:173) with an Igbo proverb which says, “what an old man sees sitting down, a young man cannot see standing up”. This explains why the elders are given the prerogative of naming. They have a great understanding of worldviews, particularly family histories. They are protective of cultural values because of their rich knowledge of events. It looks like Alford (1988:44) exonerated this notion, by writing that “of all relatives, grandparents are typically the preferred name source”. To add value to elders, Sengani (2015:1,2) further stated that:

In most African cultures, children are given names by the elders, especially by grandmothers. This task is assigned to them as they are seen as custodians of culture, history and heritage. Traditionally, children are named by specific people only, such as the elders or medicine men or women and grandmothers. They are regarded

as having the social power and capacity to impose constraints on the younger people's and thoughts to subject them to the elders. The reason is that "they and they alone have privileged access to valued resources, such as the knowledge surrounding naming".

Since there are no regulations, namers among the Shona people, may come from "grandparents, parents and other relatives, all play a leading role in the naming of the child. The presentation of a present could be accompanied by a name which best depicted one's conception of the event" (Dureen & Green, 2016:61). This means that there are multiple name givers depending on society. The semblance of male chauvinism among Shona people, paves the way for fathers to be principal name givers. As presidents of their own families, they are the decision makers. Mothers and grandparents come second and third in a role. According to Alford (1988:37), "fathers are the most frequent name givers, followed closely by mothers. Grandparents, aunties and uncles are often less given the right to name children". He went on to say that Mbuti Pygmies of Central Africa and the Trukese of Micronesia, naming is more of responsibility given to the parents to assign duties to their children. Hence the father names his sons and the mother names her daughters. Which means naming is suggested by the sex of the new-born. This is in line with the belief that parents contribute largely to the formation of their children's identities (Alford, 1988:37). To the Zulus of South Africa, naming is a shared family experience. Grandparents are given preference while parents and aunties act as senior advisors. A child is named at a ceremony where beer is brewed (Dickens, 1985:22). Mkhwanazi & Iso Lomuzi point out that grandparents choose a name of their choice and give it to the parents for consideration (cited in Dickens, 1985:22). Alford (1988:30) found that:

The Dogon people of Mali, West Africa, the elders (Senior male kinsmen) has the absolute right to name a child. The man is from paternal side. He chooses his name of interest freely. Name bestowed in a public ceremony. After weeks, a child is also named by a senior member from the mother's family. Also, a third name come from a priest.

Furthermore, Alford (1988:126) avers that in many American societies, parents are name givers. Name choices is a collective decision between fathers and mothers. However, things have changed, and things are changing daily. The world is in a state of constant change. There is a wave of change as Suzman notes that:

As a result of human rights, "the women empowerment discourse, for example, has resulted in more women becoming name givers

whereas in the past only males had the right to name their children. The reality on the ground indicates that women are heads of most household, thus, fathers and grandfathers have lost their name giving prerogative (cited in Ngubane & Thabethe, 2013:6).

This means that naming practice is not a random activity but a careful strategic system that is reflective of social norms and cultural customs of the group in a particular area. Hence the claim that “the choice of forenames that parents select for their children is by no means a random one” (Mateos, 2014:81). The reason is that cultural exercise is preserved for posterity sake. The cultural patterns are truly distinctive of the namer’s geographical position or rather the origins. For these reasons, Alford (1988:129) concludes that “name giving is usually not undertaken lightly but is seen as a serious and important task”. These activities are inherently important because they are symbolic means of showing various conceptions of naming that are instrumental in forming several sources of identity and support for the child in different communities. That is why Alford (1988:37) is of the view that namers have an important role in creating a child’s identity. This prompted Ngidi (2012:93) to argue that “without identity, a person as well as a group would have no substance and without names they would essentially be without identity”. As shown that namers are different and many, they name differently. Different people have different intentions. All these namers, name with intention. It is in those intentions that we end up with names like *Mistake* and *Murambiwa* within the Shona community, which Gora & Munyarara (2015:37) describe as names that “typically meet the naming role of a parent, but such naming can be orientated towards fulfilling parental needs and goals yet concurrently objectify children as tools for expressing others’ feelings and attitudes”. This signals that naming practice is not a haphazard process, because every name given to a child reflects the intentions of the namer (Chabata, 2012:46). The reasons being that, sometimes, they chose names as a vision for their children’s lives. Hence the view that name selection is a primary and crucial stage in forming a child’s identity (Alford (1988:129). The best caption would be an explanation according to Tan that:

All cultures [...] place great emphasis on the choice of names as they provide the necessary link to the future, in terms of the parents (or other name givers) hopes and aspirations for the child and to the past, in terms of the connectedness of the name to the child’s ancestors or identification with a particular community (cited in Mateos, 2014:84).

The power to name puts the namer to a position of authority. The namer exercise his/her authority to the child to be named. This makes him/her flexible to name in whichever way he/she pleases. Holland & Carter believe that it is an exercise of power were the namer claims political and social control over the named because naming is equivalent to owning and controlling (cited in Barnes & Pfukwa, 2010:211-2). Hence, “namers find avenues through which to voice their joys, sorrows, complaints, concerns and so on. Jacobs and Squire concur, by declaring that the namer can claim social and political space over the named” (cited in Mutema & Njanji, 2013:252). Alford argues that “name giving is an act of power by which the name giver takes possession of the named entity”. Perhaps it is because of that children are valuable assets from an African point of view. Everyone wants to control the assets. Controlling starts with the rights to name. This creates friction between family members, especially the elderly and the younger generation. The power struggle begins with the right to name because in modern days, the young generation are no longer interested with the old system where children are named by elders, arguing that the elders give names which are outdated, yet they themselves prefer fashionable names. The exclusive right to name children becomes a fundamental issue. Alia remarked that “the act of naming oneself, therefore, reveals that names serve as indicators of broader social change and names are a device which explains and classifies patterns of domination and submission” (cited in Moyo, 2012:12). For instance, the girl’s name *uNomvelo* (no + *imvelo*, nature) is explained by the father of the child as follows: “you take a girl from another clan, you marry her, a child is born, that’s nature” (Koopman, 2002:42).

Every Shona child is named soon after birth. The name is important for the child to be identified and also to be assigned earthly duties. As exemplified in Charles:

In the Khasi naming ceremony, “...a diviner shows a bow and arrow to the baby and exhorts him to become a brave warrior. In the case of a female child, a hatchet and load strap take the place of the bow and arrows, as symbolic of the fact that the woman’s duty in life is to work just as that of the man is to fight (cited in Alford, 1988:46).

In addition, Alford (1988:46) writes that:

In the Masai naming ceremony, the mother goes to the cattle kraal and with her child on her back, milk the cows. When she is done, she is joined by the child’s father and three old men, and the child is named. In this way, the child is introduced to the cattle.

This symbolically means that the children are assigned duties during naming ceremonies. So, names come with duties. Of greatest importance, for the sake of registration of birth, the child is named soon after birth. Naming before birth or later after birth, might happen but does not reflect the Shona philosophy of naming, because it is a result of exceptional circumstances, like the absence of the father or a relative who has been requested to name a child. According to Koopman (2002:20), “personal name is given to a Zulu child shortly after birth”. Bryant cemented this claim when he stated that in Zulu culture, soon after birth a child is given a personal name (*igama*) by his/her father, for example Jana (cited in Dickens, 1985:23). Alford (1988:125) observed similar findings in some of American societies. Hence the conclusion that human names are key to earthly life. Of paramount importance is the rationality that names make humans special. To prolong the naming puts the speciality in suspense. The natural right to be known is both a forceful and a persuasive call for the emergence of naming to be activated soon after birth. Among Shona people, the postponing of the naming period is regarded as a lack of appreciation of the birth of the child because a child is absolutely precious. Furthermore, it is against customary and constitutional laws of the nation to delay naming. Parents have an obligation to observe the norms, to fit the child into a social matrix. Naming a child is necessarily for the reason that a child is born naked and dressed with a name to assume social respect. Respect is not inborn but earned primarily with the stamping of a name. Naming imposes respect to a baby and avert the undermining tone associated with the usage of the following terms to refer to an unnamed person, “that baby” or “that human”. Names replace these titles because they sound disrespecting, therefore deemed undesirable. I believe the Shona people respect the unity between birth and naming as earlier depicted. However, some people are inconsiderate of such logic. Alford (1988:34,65) citing different societies, argued that “naming can happen just after birth or might take days, months or years, depending on a society”. But he stressed that in certain societies, infant mortality rate may prolong naming period. He went on to mention supernatural justification among the Korean children who are named after 100 days to avoid malevolent spirits as another reason for delaying.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed Anthroponymy in general where I showed the origin and the significance of names and naming traditions. I explored a couple of theories of names and showed how every name can be represented in each of the theories. I then narrowed my discussion to personal naming and naming practices where I showed the power and authority involved in personal naming. I have further shown that naming practices from society to society.

Chapter 3

Western naming tradition and its influence on the African naming tradition

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the Western naming tradition and shows why it differs from its counterpart, African naming tradition. The chapter explains the factors considered by Western people in naming a child after birth. Based on the fact that personal naming is influenced by tradition, this chapter argues that Western names unlike African names do not focus much on semantics of names and the meanings attached thereto. It is therefore important to note that this chapter is used as a necessary tool of comparison between Western and African naming tradition. The chapter further highlights why some Africans adopt Western names. Finally, the chapter looks into the birth of what in some quarters is referred to as 'Afro-English' names.

3.2. Western naming tradition

Although Africans and Westerners are all humans, their naming traditions differ significantly. Humans as we are, we are all informed by our different traditions. With our common human ancestry, we share the essence of being human and the prerequisite to name. The emergence of humans with a convergence of personal naming practices and divergence of traditions, works like a tree with the same roots and trunk, but different branches. Humans share a starting point (birth) and arrive at the same destination (death). But along the way, humans take different routes (practices). This is a reflection of cultural diversity which must be respected. Allowing diversity to flourish is to respect the 'Will' of creation. Cultural diversity makes life abundantly rich and interesting. The variance among people puts the world on an attractive and interesting mood. The variety of 'being' diffuses uniformity as it provides alternatives, flexibility and competition to beautify the world. This prompted Biko (1987:92) who observed that many African people in South Africa displayed tendencies of western mimicry, to argue that "Black consciousness reminds black people that by assimilating values of white people, the blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black". Diversity is healthy. Reducing cultures

and practices of different people of the world into one dominant culture as in the westernisation of African cultures, is an impoverishment of civilisation.

I now wish to focus on some Western practices. Burnard observes that “in English naming traditions children are portrayed less as unique individuals than as part of an on-going family and lineage” (cited in Mateos, 2014:84). Naming in Western tradition is just a confirmation that a new life has come into being. The name given to this new life is often not assuming any particular meaning. Describing the Western name, Agyekum (2006:207-6) noted that “proper names refer very specifically (but without describing) to the person who has that name”, and simply identifies him/her. Without descriptive characteristics, the name is a mere signifier of a new entrant into life or the family. Since the name lacks meaning, there is therefore no strict relation between the name and the named. In other words, the name does not confer power or quality or character in a person named. This therefore makes it easier for name givers in choosing names as they are no rules that govern what names to give and what names not to give. Ngidi (2012:133) elaborated that Western names unlike African names are not subjected to name avoidance rules because they are not seen as being part of the person. The practical implementation of Western names is limited to serve the function of distinguishing individuals and for registration of birth entry for governmental recording. Thus, the naming is for external courtesy only. The issue of deriving meaning from a name is an alien practice in the Western tradition. Western names are very old, and their meanings are not often invoked by the name givers. For example, the name ‘Robert’ is said to mean brilliant fame, according to Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert#:~:text=The%20name%20Robert%20is%20an,%22bright%2C%20shining%22>). However, it is not often that all name givers invoke this ancient Germanic name’s meaning when they name their children. Unlike the West, Africans do invoke meaning of names. For Africans, the identifying aspect of a name is of little importance. Africans give much attention to the meaning and the influence of a name. Hence Neethling stressed that the two traditions are distinguishable by the meaning they ascribe to the name (cited in Ngubane & Thabethe, 2013:1).

In Western tradition, the reason for naming children has nothing to do with semantic meaning of the name. Instead, as Andersen observed:

Most of these connotations have nothing to do with the obscure semantic meanings of the names, rather they can be traced to famous people or characters with those names as well as to coinciding personal experiences with people so named (cited in Alford, 1988:147).

Whether a name has a meaning or not is neither a concern in Western naming practices. Most parents or name givers do not bother themselves to find out meanings of the names they give to their children. Even those names with obvious and transparent meanings, their usage are ignored or unrecognised. Agyekum (2006:207) explained that:

Names are only considered as arbitrary labels that refer to certain signified entries, therefore, the signifier and the signified may not share certain intrinsic qualities. This notion is true when we consider situations where people who bear the same name behave differently.

Koopman (2002:17,34) elaborated further:

To Euro-Western thought generally, a name is not part of a person or a personality. The name is a 'label', a 'tag', something to be used in reference to a person, but not more than that. Among students of a Euro-Western background, the reason for giving the name is hardly ever linked to the underlying meaning of the name, and most name bearers are not aware of this underlying meaning. The term Euro-Western name means names of European languages, for example, English, Dutch, Portuguese and so on; the Western world and North America as compared to African names from Bantu languages, for example, Sotho, Venda, and so on (Koopman, 2002:18).

The Western tradition views an individual and the name as separate entities. The relationship between the two is external not internal and lacks in-depth connection. Although an individual is regarded as having intrinsic qualities and as an end in himself/herself, his/her name is not regarded as such. Alford (1988:146) asserts that "the absence of a belief in the magical powers of the names to affect their bearers is, of course, consistent with this rarity of meaningful names" in their Western tradition. Dickens (1985:136) has observed the same in her study entitled *Western influences on the Zulu system of personal naming*. Of all the Zulu speaking people that were interviewed, it was found that the majority of interviewees had expressed a preference of English names for the simple reason that English names "have no connotations". This is quite revealing! why would Zulu speaking people prefer foreign names. It is clearly for the reason that some of the powers carried by the names used affected them negatively.

On the origin of Western names, Hanks traces Western names in antiquity especially at the time of the Roman Empire. He elaborates:

The best documented Western naming system is that used in the Roman Empire. Roman names were comprised of three parts; a forename, a family or clan name equivalent to surname and a nickname which could sometimes be inherited. Romans seemed to select their forenames and clan/surnames from a very small pool of names, probably just a few dozen (cited in Mateos, 2014:31).

However, with the advent of Christianity, trends changed. Mateos (2014:31) writes that:

Christianity came to change the Roman naming system by introducing a biblical fore-naming practice. In the millennium between the Christianisation of the Roman Empire (c. 300AD) to the High middle ages (c.1000-1300AD), a patronymic or genealogical system was the most commonly practiced custom across the whole European continent. Such system was based on parentage, through which a person would be known by his own forename or given name at baptism (usually a Christian saint or biblical name), in addition to a genitive associated to one of his parents' forenames or sometimes supplemented by a nickname or occupation.

It is also important to note that Western people maintain a small stock of names because of religious convictions. Some Western people prefer to perpetuate names found in their religious books. They respect their religious beliefs to an extent that they cannot see any goodness outside it. Alford (1988:130) found that American Catholics "are theoretically bound by 761, set forth by Pope Benedict's XV in 1917, to select names for their children from the church's list of acceptable saints name". This therefore shows that religions can also influence naming decisions in some societies.

Despite the changes from Roman to Christian naming system, the stock of names among Westerners remain small. Circulation and recycling of names continued to be the only possible answer to address name shortages in Western practices. The names come from role models in the media, people whom parents associate with, and from various forms of literature. It is from those sources where parents draw a shortlist of their preferred names. Most of these European names are biblical names. According to Mateos (2014:91), European parents have to "first (a) consider a wide 'pool of available forenames', from which they; (b) select a shortlist of final options, and (c) through elimination proceed to select the final preferred forename". Since

circumstantial naming is irrelevant to the Western tradition of naming, the continued repetitive usage resulted to an overflow of similar names as exemplified by Wilbur Zelinsky, a Geographer at Pennsylvania State University. It is shown by Alford (1988:150) that Zelinsky had observed an interesting pattern of name recycling among the English-speaking Americans. Of the 94 000 English names that were investigated the following names were recycled most: John, William and James, George, Thomas and Joseph. Zelinsky affirms the existence of the same pattern of name recycling in England. Such an overuse of names is unavoidable among the Western people due to the continued replication of those personal names. At the rate of the recurrence of these names, one can almost predict the names of new-born babies. Issah *et al* (2015:73) explain that “names to be given to an infant are predictable because few socio-cultural factors influence naming dynamics in those societies”. This influences the conclusion that there is nothing in a name.

What prompts recurrence of names? According to Mateos (2014:87) there are many factors that led to the reuse of the same names among people of various Western cultures: (a) popularity or trendiness of a name; (b) desirability of a name because of the social status associated with the name; (c) commonality of a name and (d) the need to preserve a certain tradition of name.

The phenomenon of name reuse is stronger among males than among females. Ross recorded only “33 different first names for 174 boys, but 52 different first names for 108 girls” (cited in Alford, 1988:150). This indicates that name reuse is affected by gender. Male names are reused more frequently than female names because even in many European societies, males have been given to safeguard family prestige. This is often done through the continuous usage of their parent’s names, especially if a family is in good standing in society. Females are not accorded the same responsibility because of the fact that they will leave their biological family when they get married (Mateos, 2014:87).

Western naming tradition operates with a smaller library of names because of the tendency to reuse the same names. The depletion of names has led to the birth of prefixes and suffixes alongside the same names. This is done to avert confusion among family members with the same name. They are added to work as assistant signifiers in a person’s name. For example, in many families, fathers name their

firstborn sons after themselves by using the following appendings: 'Jr', 'II', 'III', 'IV' as can be seen in the following names: Martin Luther King Jr, Donald Trump Jr, Alexander I, Louis XVI, Robertson, Jameson, McDonald, McGregor and so on. Taylor explains further that "throughout the period (1913-1968), there was a strong and positive association between a father's occupational prestige and the propensity to name his son after himself" (cited in Alford, 1988:136). However, we are warned Zweigenhaft, Hayes & Haagen that "possessors of Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV and so on), may feel like part of a long line of respected individuals, while possessors of a (Jr), may feel as though they are the lesser or smaller versions of their fathers" (cited in Alford, 1988:145). The prefixes and suffixes above can also give an impression that the independence or autonomy of those named with such prefixes and suffixes is undermined. Additionally, there is also a practice of adding the name of one's father, mother or husband may be added to one's given name for instance Mary-John, Mary-Ann, Le-Anne, Peter-Paul (Alford,1988:70). These additions are also known as assistant identifier.

Furthermore, there is also the usage of nicknames to distinguish two or more people of the same names. Such nicknames often play a role of descriptor, wherein the person's character is described in order to distinguish him/her from others who maybe using the same name. As shown by Mateos (2014:31) that "name of the famous Emperor Gaius Julius Caesar (100 – 44BC, meant that the last element (Caesar) was a nickname meaning 'fine head of hair', while rather counter – intuitively Julius was his clan name". It looks like the nickname 'Caesar' came closer to resemble the African conception of naming, with the exception that the nickname is given after one has shown attributes of what he/she does best. with African naming practice, it is the motivational call of a name that let the person do what his/her name means, and that is best for him/her.

The semantic meaning of nicknames is found in both traditions. Western people's nicknames are like African names. They are meaningful and point to a specific person. But over a period of time, the nickname which is serving as a descriptor of the character of the person named, becomes more popular than the other name of this same person. For instance, Shepherd 'the Major 1' Bushiri who is one of the Pastors who founded a church by the name *Enlighted Christian Gathering* in South Africa is nicknamed 'the Major one', but this nickname from time to time overshadows the

actual name of Pastor Bushiri to an extent that the Pastor is now simply known as the 'Major 1'.

It is further observed that Western people are patronymic in their naming systems. This means that the father's forename is used to create a surname for a newly born child. Mateos (2014:31) expounds that:

In Iceland, the patronymic system still survives today, that is, a person's surname is derived from the father or mother's forename, for example, Sigurdardottir, the daughter of Sigurdar. In the rest of Scandinavia, patronymic system survived until the nineteenth century, when the existing patronymic surnames became fixed and hereditary. Hence the high frequency of names ending in "-son" in Sweden or "-sen" in Denmark, meaning "son of" amongst many other suffixes.

This indicates that the naming system is confined to a small pool of names and concepts. Western people do not seem to take interest in creating new names. It is for that reason Alford (1988:68) expressed that Western naming system is very poor at distinguishing individuals. On the whole, Western names add nothing new to the existing naming system.

3.3. Western versus African naming practice

In this section I show how the Western naming tradition has and continues to influence the African naming tradition. I will therefore explain how many Shona speaking people came and continue to be given un-African like George, Elizabeth, Marry and so on, in African naming practices. According to Ngubane & Thabethe (2013:3), "foreign names were not applicable in historical Africa as they had no practical relevance in indigenous communities". Cultural and social tensions among Africans and Westerners are an ongoing reality. The adoption and adaption of foreign names brought about the emergence of a new culture in Africa. A conflict of cultures occurred. Cowan *et al*

Express this conflict as follows:

Culture is now understood as historically produced rather than static, unbounded rather than bounded and integrated, contested rather than consensual, incorporated within structures of power such as the construction of hegemony, rooted in practices, symbols, habits, patterns of practical mastery and practical rationality within cultural categories of meaning rather than any simple dichotomy between ideas and behaviour, and negotiated and constructed through human action rather than

super-organic forces (cited in Ngidi, 2012:31).

Western occupation of Africa brought huge changes in African culture. Cultural reformation could not translate into cultural transformation, but it became cultural deformation. Dhlamini *et al* (2013:1726) affirm that cultural colonisation of Africa brought depersonalisation and dehumanisation of indigenous people. Biko (1987:93) also bemoans the fact that Africans had to despise and disown the own culture in order to embrace a new culture of the West. Therefore, the adoption of Western names has alienated the Africans from their culture. It was actually an affirmation and an endorsement of the superiority of the Western culture., This resulted into a manipulation of African naming tradition. That is why it is difficult to define Africa today without mentioning colonisation. The reason is that all African nations have been affected by Western occupation. It is therefore important to reflect the role of Christianity, Colonisation and Westernisation of African naming traditions. To win the hearts of Africans, polite speaking was an effective approach to blind the black people. Unimaginably, it all started with (re)naming of people to give them a European identity, to appear similar as brothers and sisters – members of the same human family.

(Re)naming confirms a position of authority to the person who names. Gilmore observes the same when he asserts that, “to name an object is to control it” (cited in Barnes & Pfukwa, 2010:214). Importantly, the power to name is the power to change and the power to change is the power to control. To control is to impose one’s ‘will’ over the (re)named. By (re)naming, it means the name giver is indeed in charge. If the person is in charge, he/she can be can command obedience. The one who command obedience is the ruler and his/her ‘will’ is observed. Following the reasoning above it is clear that the person who does the (re)naming has the power to (re)define. To (re)define is to claim control. As Allen maintains that “to name is to control, redefine and demystify” (cited in Barnes & Pfukwa, 2010:214). Mushati (2013:82) justifies this stating that named individuals are not free but victims of power politics. Mungwini (2011:4) elaborates that naming is an important step in the production of power and privilege in social circles. Naming is equivalent to influencing a person in Shona naming tradition. The power to (re)name can change the discourse since the name giver is capable to (re)direct the person’s story. Even prophet Bushiri observes the same thing in the context of Christianity:

Say: 'Heavenly Father, I need my Miracle today. Change my story, change my name in the name of Jesus'. "Do you know that when God changes your story, even your name changes. People are now calling you Miriam. But when God changes your story, they will say: Madam. Today, all I want you to do is to claim your miracle' says Bushiri (<https://malawi24.com/2019/02/16/bushiris-daughter-heals-hiv-positive-woman/>).

An obvious assumption is that the change of a name means an end of a preceding chapter in one's life. A new name is equipped with new narratives. Change involves replacement of one's old identity which is buried or temporarily suspended so as to allow a new identity to be born. The name represents an identity as shown by Barnes & Pfukwa (2010:211) that "the concept of identity is closely linked to the activity of name giving". It is for that reason Magudu *et al* (2014:73) claimed that "forcing the local children to assume foreign names deprived them of their identities and heritage, which rendered the blacks a rootless people without identity". Indeed, naming is a tool of excising dominance to the named individual. It is a malicious way of showing thoughts about preferred identities. Fairclough & Wodak as well as Bakhtin (Holquist) noted that through naming, one can express an ideology that can work against others (cited in Sengani, 2015:4). It is the ideology that rules. The powerful create ideas and used those ideas to manipulate the powerless and rule them directly or indirectly. Ideologically, naming was used to introduce the new discourse in Africa. Since names are active means of (re)constructing and or (re)structuring a new beginning, "names can be a form of violence against those communities excluded from the process of naming" (Mungwini, 2011:5). It may then be argued that missionaries acted as agents of colonisation. The argument maybe based on the fact that they were on the forefront of calling for (re)naming of Africans. It is therefore suggested that they paved the way for their political masters to conquer Africans quietly in the name of God. Dickens (1985:101) argues that white people successfully destroyed black people's mind and reduced them to nothing. Martin maintains that:

The power of naming perhaps does not appear anywhere more obviously than in colonial situations where it was a question of both seizing a space, and the people occupying it, and of categorising these people in such a way that the "differences" assigned to them legitimised and perpetuated the domination resulting from the conquest (cited in Mungwini, 2011:5).

It can then be assumed that Africans were psychologically arrested and became incompetent in terms of decision making. Psychological incapacity is the worst form incapacity. It surpasses physical incapacity. To witness the ineffectiveness of

psychological incapacity, Africans took a position that turn to suggest that 'white' was synonymous with goodness. In search for goodness, blacks willingly renounced their culture and pronounced themselves as second-class Europeans. They accepted (re)naming and were shaped in European standards. The changes suggested that everything African was undesirable and everything European was desirable. Dickens (1985:97) explains this mockery as follows "the usage of Western names put the impression that Africans, for example, Zulu is rated second black German, English, Irish or French". With regards to French colonies, this vindicated the idea of assimilation. It is for this reason that blacks respect(ed) everything white. Blaming the white people alone without blaming black people who were hungry of being mocked and further permitted white people to describe them as sub-humans, can be unfair and unfaithful. Black people quickness to surrender and submit is questionable. It can therefore be said that Africans themselves were and still are willing participants in the ordeal facing at the hands of white. To this assumption, the plasticity is therefore, to a narrower sense, be blamed to primitive mentality of the then African. Although it is arguable to say whites reacted to an open opportunity which anyone could not have afforded losing, indeed, how can anyone be cheaply convinced by the notorious excuse that white people cannot pronounce African names? So, does this mean that English is very easy to pronounce, and black people must adopt it? Perhaps, "the privilege of having resources were used. In need of employment, a black man had no option but to change a name. That is why today, educated people resent to take an alien name to meet other people's needs" (Dickens,1985:122). They used their resources to excuse themselves that African names were difficult to pronounce, and these names were helpful to communicate between themselves and the black people (Makoni *et al* (2007:447). The situation was self-evident that there was a war of tradition. It was a psychological war. Africans was to a greater extent defeated, considering the infiltration of Western names in Africa. The adoption of Western names by Africans, in any way, was not a 'pull factor' but a 'forced factor'. It is for that reason Grillo remarked that "names can be a site of struggle" (cited in Sengani, 2015:8). The adoption of Western names had measurable impact. It created a mindset that blacks were defeated, and they were of inferior class. It appears that Africans by adopting Western names, whiteness has become a badge of superiority and capability. This tells that the African self-reflection became ugly and the European self-reflection appeared beautiful. Mungwini (2011:4) argued that:

In Africa, colonial authorities employed naming as a tool of control and a means of inscribing and reifying or denigrating certain cultural and political ideologies. In order to portray certain cultural and political ideologies as superior, inferiorization of other cultures was an important pre-requisite.

As the forerunners, tactically equipped with persuasive sweet talk, which was practically disastrous, it cannot be argued that the proponents of colonisation were missionaries who acted as an alibi. They positively marketed their beliefs. Christianity was a destructive weapon used to ambush Africans. The first step was mass manipulation which can be described as brain genocide. The demands were awkward and derogatory aimed at destructing rather than constructing. The seriousness of the destruction culminated to human deformation, an offense which lies above character deformation. Character deformation, serious as it maybe, is however surpassed by human deformation or the brain genocide. A denial to name themselves using their native names is pure exclusion from activity deemed human in Africa. It was nothing other than an arrogant tactic of discrediting the humanity of the other race. There was greater bias, a scientific and psychological corruption among the colonisers. According to Dr Sibusiso Bhengu, “much of the evangelisation of Christian missionaries was mere Europeanisation. As such it urged attack on African traditions” (cited in Dickens, 1985:65). Biko (1987:93) believes that missionaries facilitated the colonisation process. He blamed the annexation of Africa by the West, as reasons behind the unending calamities among Africans.

3.4. Erosion of Africanness

The eagerness for domination undermines the natural law that claims that everybody is somebody by nature. To demonstrate the inhumane treatment of Africans by Europeans, Dickens (1985:66) reports the unfortunate course of events “when the missionaries first arrived in South Africa, [where] they told the natives that all their customs were pagan and heathen and should be dropped”. By calling the other tradition barbaric, it is an insult to the tradition and an assault to the people who practiced it. An attack to the practices has physical implications to the practitioner of that tradition. The sweeping away of everything African, including their names, can be shown to be inhumane and undermining to the cultural life of the African people.

African philosophy suffered the same fate. In undermining the way of life, this has put the white race at the apex of all humanely activities. This makes the intention obvious - the removal of Africanity. Accordingly, Africanity means cultural activities practiced by people of African descent. It would seem that Europeans took advantage of the fact that culture is something that is dynamic and porous to radically change African culture to suit their interest. Ngidi (2012:32-32) defines culture in the following way culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. For Ngidi, culture is that which human beings learn or acquire as members of society. Culture is made up of learned aspects as opposed to inherited aspects of human thinking and behaviour (*ibid*).

Names and naming are embedded in culture, any changes of names and naming automatically means a cultural shift. Langacker (in Ngidi, 2012:130) argues that “Language and culture are neither separate nor identical entities, but they overlap extensively, and both are facets of cognition”. In themselves, names are actively built from language. Since names are linguistic forms that are embedded in the politics of language, they are also affected by cultural changes. Mateos (2014:29) contents that:

Language is an inherent human function and naming is just one of its multiple and inevitable consequences. Through naming we have defined ourselves through millennia, in ways that have involuntarily bounded human groups up through time and space.

There is a strong connection between language and the name. Both create an identity in the person named thus, “when a human dimension is introduced into an analysis of the language of language planning, naming practices are consequently construed as ‘acts of identity’” (Makoni *et al.*, 2007:444). Joseph (in Makoni *et al.*, 2007:444) believe that languages are political in form. “If languages are political, the meta-languages used to describe them are equally political” (Bauman & Briggs, Errington, Makoni & Penny Cook) including their linguistic forms” (cited in Makoni *et al.*, 2007:444). In Zimbabwe, for example, taking up a war name was an act of erasure or an attempt to delete an identity derived from the past in order to replace it with a new identity. The new names bring new attributes that supersede or erase the existing ones. Adopting the name “*Teurairopa* (spill blood) not only erased attributes of the guerrilla’s original name but ushered in a new set of characteristics altogether which included bloodshed,

aggressiveness and a readiness to sacrifice life” (Barnes & Pfukwa, 2010:212). Renaming is a process of rebuilding and its package includes new qualities. In a narrower sense, one becomes a new person. Thus, naming can signify an ideological war of some sort. The motivation behind assigning a war name during colonial struggle was to motivate people to aggressively fight the enemy (colonisers). Likewise, the motivation behind the imposition of Christian names was to weaken those who were perceived as enemies for defending. If one looks closely at the situation in which the colonised people of Africa were waging wars in defence of their motherlands, and a situation in which many of the African people were forcefully converted into Christianity and subsequently given names, one may conclude that there were two types of war at play. The intention and mechanism of carrying out the war by each warring party are the same, but the approaches followed were different. The former is a physical war, while the latter is a psychological war. Both wars kill people. The one (former) is transparently declared and both enemies are alert, while the other (latter) is opaque so that one is being fought without the knowledge of what is going on. There is an ambush in the latter war. This shows the sensitivity and volatility of (re)naming and names. It must not be taken for granted as they are deep ideological meanings embedded in it. In a sense, there is darkness and light within the name, night and day. The light in the name may deceptively appear as identification, when its darker side maybe intended as an ideology. Thus, being assigned a Christian name maybe intended to pacify one and make him/her a gullible person. In that respect, a person is weakened. He/she who assumes the Christian name, acts saintly since he/she has been given a saint’s name. Ntuli demonstrates this further:

Christianity was used as a subtle battering ram to gain hegemony over the rest of the world. It portrayed a religious system based on perfection. A perfect God against pagan gods. A perfect Jesus Christ. Perfect angels and saints. The Virgin Mary as a paragon of perfection with her immaculate conception (cited in Ngubane & Thabethe, 2013:4).

In this state of mind, the Africans’ psychological capacity is weakened. Biko (1987:92) summed up this by saying that “the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed”. It is therefore possible to argue that Christian teachings caused severe injuries to the African mind. As a result, the Africa became mentally enslaved. With this state of mind, the Africans became defenceless and exposed to

all risks. They experienced an epistemicide of the worst kind which culminated in making them believe that they are sub-humans to Europeans. The poisoned minds of Africans led them to insult their own ancestors whom they now describe as evil spirits. Ngubane & Thabethe (2013:4) concur that Christianity was an effective weapon used for the subjugation of black people in South Africa. Even Biko (1987:93) made the same observation that “religious influence by missionaries caused the erosion of African values”. One can then easily conclude that Christianity and Colonialism are trading along a parallel route heading towards the same direction, namely conquest of Africans. Christianisation of such nature was not different to Westernisation and its father colonisation. The expectations of missionaries were not different with those of the colonisers. Because both wanted blacks to renounce their customs including their names and submit to them as subjects. The appearance of Western names caused the disappearance of African names.

What were the pressure points that led Africans to give in to the imposed foreign names? It all started at schools, churches and workplaces. The need for education and employment was an immediate cause, a highway to rename. Neethling explains further that:

With the introduction of Christianity and education as practised by mission schools to Xhosa speakers in the early 19th century, came a new development. English names were bestowed upon Xhosa children by the missionaries (at baptism) and by teachers (at school). These were often referred to as “church” and “school” names (cited in Moyo, 2012:12).

Magudu *et al* (2014:73) attested that all children enrolling at school were given Western names like Francis, Nicholas or Mary, Elizabeth, and so on, So it was not a choice but the need for services like education could trap one into forced renaming. For Dickens (1985:122,148) foreign names were important for the convenience of the teacher and the administrator and not the renamed bearer. Mandela (1994:13) expressed that:

On the first day of school, my teacher, Miss *Mdingane*, gave each of us an English name. Miss *Mdingane* told me that my new name was Nelson. Why she bestowed this particular name on me I have no idea. Perhaps, it had something to do with ... Lord Nelson, but that would only be a guess (cited in Makoni et al., 2007:450).

Neethling mentioned missionaries and teachers as popular namers of that time (cited in Moyo, 2012:12). In Zimbabwe, “white native affairs administrators and employers also renamed black Africans indiscriminately with certain English names” (Makoni *et al.*, 2007:447). The insignificance of this names and naming has been observed by Koopman (2002:21-2) that:

Parents are not usually the source of the Euro-origin name, it might be given by employers, teachers, priests and others. They are most given at a later stage like during baptism, entry at school and so forth. They include names like David, John, James, Edward and Timothy, for boys, and Mary, Alice, Cynthia, Helen and Barbara, for girls.

Africans were caught in between and without choice but to adjust to the stipulated requirements to fit in the new system. This was the primary step towards the denigration and dehumanisation of everything African. Dickens (1985:158) had this to say, “English names is evidence of the arrogance of the white man who came to Natal to take not only his country but his tradition and dignity”. The trend of adopting foreign names affected most Africans in their respective countries. It systematically destroyed the conception of African personal naming and their understanding of the world. In fact, the system removed the African understanding of ‘man’ and replaced it with the European understanding of ‘man’. The presentation of Western names was readily accepted by many Africans to a point that very few problematised them. We ought to understand that although Africans had their own way of life including their naming system, education, religion and labour organisation, they fell in love with the Western way of life as it was presented as the most perfect system that can solve all of their problems.

In the era of colonisation and Christianisation, renaming could be understood as reidentifying which is tantamount to renewing and ultimately redirecting a person’s destiny. Renaming another child is equivalent to dispossessing them of identity and ultimately their humanity. The person is duplicated into two persons – he/she becomes culturally schizophrenic. The person then assumes pseudo identity. As shown in chapter 1 that a personal name is given at birth, any name given at school, work, church or wherever is not a personal name. Based on the following premises, that: (1) the name is not given at birth; (2) it is not given by parents or guardians, nor even by friend or community member; and (3) that it is foreign not African, such names do not qualify to be personal names. We shall therefore show in chapter three that it goes

against African tradition of naming to have child named by a schoolteacher or an employer. Only in exceptional cases, as we shall show, can a priest play role of naming in African naming societies. There is therefore a close connection between the name giver and the person is given the name, and the description entailed in the name. As shown before on name givers, there is nowhere a child was given a first name at birth by a schoolteacher or an employer. Only a priest, but as a third name in other African societies. This shows the connection and importance between the giver and the given, and ultimately the effectiveness of the name. If a name does not have those three qualities, then it is not a personal name. It is something else, perhaps, a nickname or a pseudo name. Renaming diluted and polluted the African philosophical conceptions of naming. Those Africans who tested the sweet-sounding religion of the West which masqueraded as godly and friendly, consequently lost the direction. But a few that remained adamant, survived the betrayal. In pursuit of freedom in the advent of national struggle, many Africans came to realise that they were playing the wrong cards on the wrong side. It is for this reason that in modern day Africa, we witness a reclaim and reconstruction of the African tradition.

3.5. The voluntary adoption of Western names

African tradition survived a terrible onslaught by the colonisers. In the post-colonial era, attempts were made to reaffirm and assert the richness and beauty of the African cultures. During the pre-colonial period, the African naming tradition was heavily characterised by situational activities that happens within families, communities or in the countries. The Shona people of Zimbabwe could name their children names which were etymologically rooted from social circumstances, for example, *Karikoga* (the lone one), *Nhamo* (poverty), *Chimusoro* (big head) and many others. Every name had a social reason for its existence. The late seventh century saw the arrival of foreign names as a result of Westernisation. Colonial powers had brought to the local people European names that carried very little meaning for black people. Shona culture was not spared from this imposition of foreign names. During colonial period, naming tradition changed. As previously shown that during the Christianisation, colonisation and Westernisation period of Africa, Africans were renamed by missionaries, European employers and teachers, often against their 'will'. It looks like Africans

content with European names during the hash colonial period. For that reason, Africans where now taking initiative and voluntarily assigning European names to their children, all by themselves. Some of the names include Peter, James, Thomas, Theresa, Barbara, Miriam, Aaron, Isaac, Rachel, Paul, Gabriel, Mary and so on. Most of these names where from the bible. Truthfully, the names given did not reverse the logic that minimise and regarded Africans as second-class citizens.

With Africans taking the initiative to name their children with European names, the old discourse and its logic where cemented. Foucault and Grillo see discourse as a “site of power struggle” (cited in Sengani, 2015:4). In this case, the Europeans power struggle and domination were now led or facilitated by the Africans themselves. Africans seem to enjoy imported names, strangely never ensured that their African names were exported. The daily contact with Western people legitimised the usage of European names. All name givers ended up giving names that they could hear from their surroundings, that is workplaces, churches, schools, media and so on. In other words, European names where now domicile and no longer names of the workplace, the church and the school only. By giving European names to their children, black people thought that it was a sign of showing love, friendship and a warm welcome to their European counterpart. This has been taken from the social practice wherein Shona people believe that naming one’s own child after a certain person, who for instance works or lives closely to the namer demonstrate respect and appreciation for the person. This how African got deceived by Europeans and consequently abandoned their naming practices. The adoption of European names was one aspect of how Africans emulated the lifestyle of Europeans. For Dickens (1985:121), the adoption Euro-Christian names did not only express on the part of Africans, a desire to be like Europeans, it was also used by missionaries to deceptively make Africans to believe that this is what God also want. This prompted Machaba to question that why beautiful names like *Nkosinathi* (God is with us) could not be accepted by the missionaries (in Moyo, 2012:12). In response to Machaba, Africans submitted themselves fully to their colonisers, and tend to be beggars, thus using this namesaking as a strategy for pleasing Europeans. Honouring a white person or his/her relative was a show of loyalty to Europeans and a sign of ambition to be superior. By using European names, Africans wanted to emulate great figures in European history. For example, names like Elizabeth, Charles, Edward, Alexander, Isabel and so on,

were used to express admiration for Queen Elizabeth, Prince Charles, King Edward, Alexander the great and Queen Isabel of Spain.

The usage of European names had also other advantages for Africans, for instance, they facilitated an easy access to obtaining permits, passports and government documents. Most Africans are ended up with several names which allowed them to exercise different social functions. In Zimbabwe, most of the old generation have two or three names as a result of Christianity, Colonialism and the need for employment. The (re)naming ended up with Africans having both Western and African names, like *David Mariyano Penzura*. Where 'David' is drawn from Europe and 'Mariyano' from Shona. The fact that both English and Shona names were used signifies that Africans could not afford to lose their tradition completely. The appearance of a Shona middle name indicates some resistance wherein the named does not want to totally discard the African tradition. or not to disappoint the ancestors. The named still want to maintain some contact with his/her ancestors through the African name. After all, the recitation of one's native names is important during ancestral ceremonies. Native names connect people to their living-dead (Ngidi, 2012:v). Makoni *et al* (2007:449) believes that a person can have different names which may serve different purposes hence the limited variation in their usage.

The adoption of European names gives a false impression that Africans need Europeans more that Europeans need Africans. But even more seriously that white is something and black is nothing and this prejudice is the major contributor of all problem worldwide. This is total rejection of African culture by Europeans. Having shown how African naming system was influenced by European naming system, one must be quick to point out that not all Africans adopted the European naming system. As shown by Neethling in a research contacted, "some of the respondents displayed a negative attitude towards English names as they associate them with slavery" (cited in Ngubane & Thabethe, 2013:4). Most of the old generation did not fully understand the implications of leaving their names (Dickens, 1985:145). Furthermore, it is argued by Barnes & Pfukwa (2010:215) in relation to African names that "erasure of names is not always permanent as the old meanings can later resurface with changing conditions and changing functions". This shall be shown in the next section.

3.6. The advent of 'Afro-English' names

Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, there developed a concept of 'Afro-English' names. These names were designed in Africa by Africans but through the medium of English. According to Dureen & Green (2016:61), Afro-English names, although are written in the language of English, they "have a distinct African flavour". Following Makoni *et al* (2007:454-5), these names "consists of lexical items drawn from English, but which may not be frequently used as names from a native English speaker's perspective". Examples of these names are the following: *Sinfree*, *Luckymore*, *NoPlease*, *Talkmore*, and many others.

Some categories of Afro-English names are interesting etymologically. A classic example is the name *NoViolet*. Its meaning is indirect and hidden. It can only be understood after a lengthy explanation of a happening that was captured in the name. Moji (2015:5) observes that:

NoViolet, adopted in honour of Violet – her deceased mother - is a name which causes semantic uncertainty through its Africanised lexical structure. This particularly true for English speaking audiences who thinks the prefix 'No' means 'without Violet' while it actually means 'with Violet' in the author's native Ndebele.

Ngidi (2012:135) concurs that "many onomasticians argue that names are more meaningful in the context within which they are used". The name *NoViolet*, is an addition of Ndebele plus English, and it fits into Afro-English names. The circumstance is Violet, mother of *NoViolet*. She renamed herself *NoViolet* in memory of her mother. The memory of the mother is the situational activity that produced *NoViolet*.

The name *NoViolet* is very complex with a multitude of meanings. This kind of creativity is very stylish, and it is very confusing to the hearer. Usually, Afro-English names mixes English language and African naming conception, but unlike others, *NoViolet* is extraordinary. Firstly, it mixes African language, English language and African naming conception. Secondly, it honours a person. Thirdly, it preaches the issue of identity. And fourthly, the name *NoViolet* if translated, the word means nothing, because it is pidgin, therefore no dictionary meaning in all languages. Its meaning is based on explanation.

Afro-English names are used by second language speakers of English in Zimbabwe and other African countries that were colonised by the English (Dureen & Green,

2016:61). Similar findings have been noted by Saarel – Maunumaa (in Koopman, 2002:21) who refers to Afro-English names as ‘Euro-Origin’ names that are “derived from another culture, usually from colonial language dominant in the area”. In principle, this means that there can be equivalents of Afro-English names depending on the country that colonised Africans. So, there are Afro-French names, Afro-Portuguese names, Afro-Spanish names, Afro-Finish names, and so on. But for our purpose, I will focus on Afro-English names because of Zimbabwe’s colonial history. As Zimbabwe has been colonised by Britain, English names are rampant in Zimbabwe.

Afro-English names may also be known as ‘Non-Standard English names’ (Fabian in Makoni *et al.*, 2007:454-5). These names are regarded as being out of the ordinary. Fabian elaborates further:

From the viewpoint of a standard language ideology the names are unusual because they deviate from conventional standard native English spelling. For example, *Exavier*, (*Xavier*), *Fanwell* (*Fanuel*), *Jerald* (*Gerald*), *Indirance* (*Endurance*), *Bigg* (*Big*), *Happinos* (*Happiness*) Some of the spellings of the names reflect forms of writing conventions by second language users of English in which English names are inserted into a first language (in Makoni *et al.*, 2007:454-5).

These names are African in everything except that they are written and articulated in English. However, the names are still reflective of Western influence. In modern day Zimbabwe, some names are constructed by mixing both local languages and English. This development is a relief to many African particularly the Shona people as it is embraced and credited as self-discovery. The usage of Afro-English names partially restored their once lost conception of personal naming. But still pure reinvention is required to totally avert the Western practices that laughs Africans as imposters.

In themselves, these names are reflective of situational activities happening in people’s lives. The usage of foreign language is definitive to the logic of partial restoration. Most importantly, it was a great opportunity for Africans to mix an African conception of naming with a foreign one. The dualism sounds half African, half foreign. But it is categorically classified as African, since it is etymologically coined in Africa. Africans are their proponents in an attempt to preserve the naming conception but losing the language. The move was not only aimed at pleasing foreign masters but Africans themselves. It looked like an upgrade. That only shows the extend of the damage caused by colonisation.

Naming for social reason reproduced names that appeared to be social games for social play. Thus, “among the Bush Negroes, a name may even take the form of a joke, like “he is pretty in the night” (Alford, 1988:61). Names like *Goodness*, *Loveness*, *Love more*, *Gift* and many others, sound funny and display a vexing meaning to some people. “Most of these names are dialectal and sound humorous, idiosyncratic and sometimes nonsensical and weird to non-Zimbabwean and English native speakers but are consistent with the social and linguistic formations of New Englishes” (Kachru cited in Makoni *et al.*, 2007:440). These names are very indicative of the flexibility of personal names and that any word can be a name. The word might mean and sound nonsensical but when it is given to a person, it assumes a contextually deeper meaning.

3.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, Western naming tradition does not consider semantic meanings or circumstantial naming. Western people have a small stock of names and reoccurrence of those names define their traditions. The advent of colonisation and its effect caused the erosion of African culture. Missionaries also did not spare the African culture. African adopted Western names and further created the Afro-English names to fit and suit the Western standards. But in themselves, Afro-English names reflect a restorative spirit.

Chapter 4

African philosophical conception of personal naming

4.1. Introduction

This chapter is the epicentre of this research. The chapter seeks to prove that given names of African people have a multiplicity of intentions that overlap identification purpose, and that is the position of the whole study. The chapter argues that among Africans, particularly Shona speaking people of Zimbabwe, personal names are circumstantially and purposefully given. Furthermore, the chapter shows that in African tradition, names and their bearers are connected and inseparable. In addition, the chapter reflects that naming can be a means of dialogue. The chapter concludes by setting the stage, introducing Shona conception of personal naming.

4.2. African naming tradition

The African naming tradition is an admission that there are other possibilities that names serve apart from an identification function that names are found to be strongly instrumental to. To that end, there is a sizeable stock of names to use in a variance of functions. The variance is a product of a multitude of beliefs from various ethnic groups. The conception of personal naming among Africans is belief-centred along ethnic lines and as such makes naming a complex issue in Africa. The African tradition's amenability to plurality and multiplicity broadens its wings and allows the large frequency of unreplicative names, now and again. The African tradition is systematically strategical in dealing with situational issues when naming children. In Africa, a personal name is a large statement about the surrounding situation in relation to the bearer of the name or the family, and or the community, sometimes the country itself. The naming tradition among Africans is very interesting in the sense that it is very informative and educative. Comparatively, the Western names are limited to a mere absolute reference, but the African names overlaps that purpose by far as they fulfil a multiplicity of functions. Okere (1995) noted that "in traditional Igbo life, there is a lot in a name". Makondo *et al* (2017:2) concurs stating that in traditional Shona customs people are given names that resonate with family and community values. As

shown by Sengani (2015:2-3), that names are meaningless or not, is a hotly debated issues in the Western culture. Unlike the West, the Africans when giving the African name, they are fully aware of the proper meaning expressed in that particular name. Makondo *et al* (2017:2) attested that “a Shona name cannot just ‘be’, it should also ‘mean’ something”. This implies that a name should not only *be* but should also be *doing* something. It is the Shona people’s culture to notify the public about their circumstances and reactions about prevailing conditions of their families, communities or their country. Naming in African philosophy is an artistic enterprise. As Mushati (2013:72) writes, “the art of naming espouses an African philosophy and historical consciousness”. Mbiti on philosophy writes that:

Philosophy of one kind or another is behind the thinking and acting of every people, and a study of traditional religions brings us into those areas of African life where, through word and action, we may be able to discern the philosophy behind ... African philosophy refers to understanding, attitude of mind, logic and perception behind the manner in which African peoples think, act or speak in different situations in life (cited in Ngidi, 2012:72).

Philosophically then, African names are products of societal activities for social reasons. Kaphagawani puts it that, “names and naming have a philosophical significance” (cited in Mungwini & Viriri, 2010:32). For example, “if a person is named *Tapfuma* (which means ‘we have become rich’), the name is believed to be a prayer to the ancestors to make the child wealthy when he grows up” (Makondo *et al.*, 2017:1). But sometimes, a name is a mouthpiece of both the oppressor and the oppressed, the rich and the poor. They are social means of spreading human developments, be it positive or negative. Most Zulu people say that “the names we give are given with reason, for example, *Velaphi* (meaning ‘where do you come from’). Mostly, [such a] name is given to an illegitimate child” (Dickens, 1985:143,145). Since African names are situational, (that is), they are dynamic and not static, they tell stories about the circumstance of the person named.

Most Africans have identical naming practices and tactics. The naming is centred on the prevailing circumstances of the name giver, perhaps the parent(s) or grandparent(s), sometimes immediate relatives or friends. The names are indicative of African people’s mindset. Some names are daily dreams, others are daily political decisions within families, or communities or even the country at large. That is why

Alford (1988:5) claimed that “names are intended mainly for a message, although from a different perspective depending on society, showing different messages”. The message appears to be an important requirement if not a prerequisite in African names. The message is direct or indirect, it targets the bearer, or the family or family member(s), sometimes the community or even the country itself, it all depends on the name giver’s interest. The name giver uses the opportunity to make a statement in a word like *Takunda* (meaning ‘we have won’). It might happen that there were economic challenges, and the name is a claim that we have overcome the predicament. The name is semantically pregnant, meaning it constitute a message from the name giver to the intended audience who might have been critical to the family during difficult times then. So, name givers might choose to be pessimistic or optimistic, the option is theirs. The African people strongly believe that names have meanings and as such, they are important symbols for social engagements. Unlike the Western names, African names are quite different in both constructions and usage. The African names have an extended usage which is absolutely extraordinary. The extension is reflective of diverse conceptions in naming traditions. In the name, there is everything. All ways of life for African people are encompassed in the names. For instance, the name can reflect a concept or an approach to life for a certain African tribe.

Personal names are multifarious. They describe and refer to many dimensions of the life of the person to be named. Naming itself is a conscious decision. The practice is respected because the name provides rationale why things or the circumstance is as is. Issah *et al* ((2015:73) found that:

In African societies, name culture (that is, the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired in the course of generations) is an important component of the cultural system in that it is conceived among the African people that good name should be given to a child because the name assigned will determine a lot about the present and the future of the child.

This gives the conclusion that naming is scientific social art. It contains very important and useful information about African people. For example, their goals in life. After a successful business venture, names like Richman, *Tapfuma* (meaning ‘we are rich’), Success, *Tagarika* (‘we are living good’) and so on, will make more sense to such a family.

The circumstantial naming considers social and economic situation of the family during the time of birth and other social links with other people. Sometimes name givers look at the political situation in the country. For that reason, Gora & Manyarara (2015:34) maintains that “naming aesthetics in Zimbabwe as in the rest of African cosmology have always been incident-based and this trend somewhat persists”. Through baby names, these incidents are aired freely. Enjoyment and disappointment, positives and negatives, all happenings within families or communities are distributed for consumption through names. The African tradition is a remote media broadcaster of people’s experiences on different issues happening on daily basis. Thus, names give an opportunity to people who are not part of the family or community to know what is happening. Mutema & Njanji (2013:251) argued that “naming in African society should not be taken for granted because through it, generations find outlets for their frustrations, happiness, sorrows, complaints and social comments”. It is from these actions where that names are produced. The names are an action or reaction to these actions. The uniqueness of these (re)actions somehow is instrumental to the uniqueness of the named and sometimes overlaps to the uniqueness of a personality to be created. Okolo elaborates that:

The status of self as an individual entity, then is recognised in African philosophy, proof that self has somehow a double status – one as a being-in-relation to others, the other as unique and unduplicable. One of the clearest ways the African establishes this fact of uniqueness, identity and discreteness is through names (cited in Coetzee & Roux, 2003:214).

Tyrell (cited in Dickens, (1985:27) posited that “to the Zulu, each child was special, and the name reflected this uniqueness”. Any name given, is undoubtedly known that there is a meaning for that name. It is very rare to find a name without a meaning in Africa. Every given name has a story to tell about something around the person named. There is no mere naming in Africa, especially among the Shona speaking people of Zimbabwe. Koopman (2002:20) observes that:

There is always a reason for choosing the name, and the reason is always linked to the underlying meaning of the name. To give example, a Zulu mother who has had a difficult pregnancy or has lost other children in birth or when very young may decide to name a healthy baby boy *uNkosinomusa* (literally, ‘The Lord is merciful’) because she believes that God has interceded in her pregnancy to spare her further misfortunes.

This philosophy corresponds with Okolo's conceptual analysis that "many African names point to the circumstances and conditions of particular individuals, to their family background, social status and so on" (cited in Coetzee & Roux, 2003:214). Dickens (1985:37) observes that among Zulu people, name giving is important because names are given to commemorate events surrounding the birth of a child. Agyekum (2006:208) concurred that "Akan names are not arbitrary, but they are based on socio-cultural and ethno-pragmatic contexts". Sengani (2015:2) explains that "among the Vhavenda, names are not only created to identify their bearers, but also used to communicate valuable information between the name givers and their addressees". This is not arguable that the naming systems among different African nationalities are logically identical. Logical similarities among different nationalities on these descriptions are complimentary to the Shona conception. As reflected, the traditions show a unity in experience.

The naming procedures are instrumental in giving sociological and psychological meanings to names. The art of naming as a whole is oral history. Its interest is aimed at displaying and solving basic problems of African people. It is qualified as oral literature. Somehow, the naming is a celebration of intellectual creativity. A promotion of freedom to express thoughts upon the society lived through the child born. Indeed, the African ways of naming is a public discourse. It is a public platform of spreading their conceptions of life. The approach is an intellectual method of expressing views by the name giver without the possibility of inciting violence. It is a hidden expression of showing (dis)satisfaction with daily happenings of life. Internal and external contradictions and tensions are portrayed without harm. It is a harmless method, with a zero tolerance to physical fighting. Problems are raised and addressed, and solutions are given. There is a multiple consideration of all sorts of factor when naming. Every word, once it is declared a name is translatable into a meaningful name. The name becomes indicative of the named person. A name gives an ethnophilosophical reflection of the self. It is intended to show who the person is and where the person belong to. The flexibility of the African conception of personal naming gives a considerable variety of names. But the precise nature of the name depends on a community. But in essence, all names must assume particular meanings. Obviously, due to diversity of beliefs their formulations would be different, as shown here below by Dickens (1985:25),

Because the Zulu regarded a child as a gift or a blessing to be sought

and prayed for, the birth of a child was often seen as an indication of being favoured by the powers that be. The parents' acknowledgement of this favour is ever remembered in the name *Sibongile* ('we are thankful') and *Sipho* ('gift'). These names are variations of the theme of joy at life's goodness.

In Shona, the names above (*Sibongile* and *Sipho*) are equivalent to *Tinotenda* ('we are thankful') and *Chipo* ('gift'). In this case, the parents are thankful to God and or ancestors whom they believe are the giver of life and they have made their dream of having a child to come true. In another case, an *Amhara* mother, after a very difficult birth, may name her child 'Miracle'. Somali children often receive names referring to birth circumstance of time, for example, a child born the month of March would be named '*March*'. A study by Kimenyu on time names reveals the pastoral culture of the Kirundu and Kinyarwanda communities as the names show the different parts of the day being referred to by specific activities performed around that time. For example, names such as '*Munkono*' are descriptive of the time 'when the cocks start crowing'. Again, a person who was born at 2pm during the day is called '*Amashora*' which means 'time to take the cows to the waterholes' (Mutema & Njanji, 2013:73). According to Koopman (2002:46), in "West African countries like Ghana, Cameroon and Nigeria, days of the week or market are used as personal names. In Xhosa, we have *Nogcawe*, and in Zulu, we found *Nomasonto*, all given to girl child, meaning 'born on Sunday'". Agyekum (2006:213,214,215) elaborates on the same idea:

In Akan, people are given names after the weekdays like *Kwasi* ('Sunday'), *Kojo* ('Monday'), *Kofi* ('Friday'), *Kwame* ('Saturday') and so on, for males, and for females also we have *Akosua* ('Sunday'), *Yaa* ('Thursday'), *Abenaa* ('Tuesday'). The names of these days (birthdays) were derived from the names of deities and their particular days of worshipping. This is the first automatic name every Akan child gets based on the day s/he was born even before s/he is officially named except in few cases, this first name is not tampered with. The Akans call it *Kradin* (lit) 'soul name' and they believe that this is a name that a person's soul offers him/her. It is the soul of the person that decides when to allow the unborn child to enter this world. It is believed that this particular day may affect his/her behaviour, fate and future. People born on particular days are supposed to exhibit the characteristics or attributes and philosophy associated with the days. For example, a Monday born is supposed to be peaceful and calm, while a Friday born is a wonderer and adventurer, and a Saturday born is creative.

Alford (1988:62-63) corroborates that:

Every Ashanti, Ghana, child receives a name referring to the day on which he/she was born. These names are called '*Kradin*' or soul names and refer to the day of the washing or purifying of the soul. There is one set for boys and another set for girls. Boys names are based on meaningful roots. The Ashanti word for Monday means "the day for peace", while the word for Wednesday makes reference to "death". It is widely believed that Monday boys (*Kwadwo*) are likely to be quiet and peaceful, while Wednesday boys (*Kwaku*) are likely to be aggressive and turn out to be troublemakers.

This justifies Okere (1995) in his observation that "the name is more than just a tag or a convenient badge of identity". In support of this belief, Jahoda examined the juvenile court records of 1700 Ashanti boys, in order to determine whether day names were related to either property or violent offences. He found that boys named after Monday or born Monday were significantly less likely than all others to have any record of delinquent offences, while those born on Wednesday were significantly more likely than all others to have a record of violent offences. The difference in behaviour, according to Jahoda, suggests names give character. In this way, people's character can be predicted (in Alford, 1988:63). Accordingly, it difficult if not impossible for anyone not to live according to their names. The connection is constructively created to be in line with the deity after which one is named. That spiritual forces in the deities are the causal agents that make these names work as intended. Mwaniki argued that "names are not only given as a means of identification, but also imposes ethical standards and social values in an indirect way" (cited Issah *et al.*, 2015:75).

In another study at the University of Botswana, Arna reports on a study in which he investigated whether black African students are loyal to names that are given to them at birth and to what extent this pattern of naming affects their first names. Data was collected among a student population of 164 first year and final year undergraduate students (95 females and 69 males). The student population presents two extreme character traits of freshness and experiences of learning in a University. According to the findings, 82 % (46 females versus 36 males) of the students displayed good and warm characters. It was discovered that this category of students displayed attractive characters which are believed to be influenced by the types of names they had. These were names like *Boitumelo* (meaning 'Joy or happiness'), *Malebogo* meaning ('thanks'), *Gaone*, meaning ('His God's'), *Kabelo* ('gift'), *keamogetse* (I have received), *Kelebogile* ('thank you'), *Keoreapetse* ('I prayed to Him'), *Lorato* ('love'), *Motlalepula* ('one who come with rain') and many others. It should be noted that the common

underlying reason for this behaviour of these students seem to be circumstances which prevailed at the time that the child was born (cited in Moyo, 2012:14-5). The conclusion of the research underlines the view that the name is very important in shaping the bearer's identity.

African names have a multi-purpose function, we have already alluded to the idea that African names do more than simply identifying an individual. Alford (1988:51) elaborate further:

(1) Name set may provide message about identity; (2) Personal names are semantically meaningful, and they may describe the actual or hoped for qualities of the individual; (3) Personal names indicate the sex of the individual; (4) Personal names may be traditional and common or unique and innovative: either type provides clues about the individual's relationship to tradition and conformity; and (5) Personal name is shared by two or more persons, they are influenced by beliefs and expectations about how people may, in a sense, share an identity (Alford, 1988:52).

These ideas about multi-purpose of names are nowhere far from the Shona conception, and extensively applicable to most societies in the African continent. A name like *Togarasei* (meaning 'how can we live') can be reflective of a conflict at a homestead. The name giver who appears to be the mother showed some disdain with the situation, questioning how we will live in the rough and tough environment. The squabbles were an ongoing event, and she felt that it was unbearable. She decided to name her son *Togarasei*, as a voice of concern for the abusive actions of the father. Her option to use a name is a strategy to avoid direct confrontation with the father of the child which might be dangerous. Thus, "naming in the African milieu provides outlets for frustrations, joys, sorrows, complaints and is therefore social commentary" (Gora & Manyarara, 2015:35). Similarly, "names such as '*Forget*', '*Believe*' and '*Idea*' are examples of names conceived in response to particular circumstances which the parent or family may have been going through" (Dureen & Green, 2016:64)

In Africa, it is common understanding that names are an important media player. They are an affordable channel of mass communication. In themselves, names are information site. This explains the power of naming and the issue of fashion of names. Issah *et al* (2015:75) maintain that African names are rich sources of information. A name is a website of a particular being. You google a person's personality and history using that particular given name. Names bring to the fore issues of particular

individuals, because through them, you can extract a person's background or hidden information. Thus, in Africa, personal names are source of information about that person (Issah *et al.*, 2015:73). The information reflects particularity of circumstances around an individual and ultimately the individual himself/self. It is therefore important to note that "names are used in all cultures to designate particularity" (Mutema & Njanji, 2013:252). Information is subjected to daily changes according to circumstantial developments. And African names are circumstantial following those developments. So, in names, there is truth and accurate information pertaining a certain period. The coming into fashion of African names is due to periodic changes. Mateos (2014:81) argues that "when these forenaming preferences are carefully studied over time, space and social groups, evidence repeatedly shows that forename choice follows very clear "fashion waves" and changes in cultural preferences". That is why "naming participates in what Alderman terms the manipulation and management of public images and impressions essential for the social construction of reality and identity" (cited in Mungwini, 2011:4). Since names are media houses, multitude of issues are shared publicly. Family issues, community issues and country issues, all are of consideration when parents are choosing baby names. For example, Robert Mugabe named his son *Nhamodzenyika* (meaning 'country's problems'). This was the time of the struggle for independence from colonial powers. He, himself was involved in the liberation struggle and that is how he named his first-born son after his experiences of the country's problems at the time. It is for that reason Dureen & Green (2016:65) write that "names are formed from a position of knowledge and are not neutral". The mood of every specific time be it political, economic, social or natural occurrences will always be reflected in the names. Tuner maintains that "hostility and ill-fillings are channelled through various forms of oral expressions either as a means of merely airing one's dissatisfaction or as a means of seeking personal redress" (cited in Ngidi, 2012:170). In names, all sorts of events are documented. Dhlamini *et al* (2013:1726, 1728) observe that:

Naming among the Ndebele is like a statement and that statement should be addressing a particular subject. Since the formula for decolonisation was a long, gradual and painful process, those who joined the struggle as guerrillas to fight white minority rule were inspired by names such as *Dingilizwe* ('looking for the nation'), *Zwelethu* ('our nation'), *Mayibuye* ('let it come – independence'), *Zibuseni* (rule yourself), *Mbuso* ('Kingdom'), *Sithandilizwe* ('we love our country') and *Sibangilizwe* (we are fighting for our country). These names gave determination,

courage, zeal and vigour to liberate themselves despite numerous challenges they encountered during the liberation struggles.

This ideological similarity among societal members was an important step towards creating a unified force during the political struggle. It was a campaigning strategy to wage an offensive to unseat the colonial regime which was infamous and unwelcome at the time. Mushati (2013:82) states that “collective memory may involve the personal, but it cannot be divorced from the power politics as it is manipulated to appear to be the sum total of people’s shared experiences”. Since names are public statements aimed at updating the world about immediate developments within the country, they clearly describe the prevailing situations in which the child is born. It is this situation that is insightful into the name giver’s mind towards the choice of the name. It is an open opportunity to voice against the boiling situation. Sometimes, the intended message is to raise awareness in order to seek external assistance. “The motivation behind a name is not always a private matter because at this time the shared public discourse was about freedom and nationhood hence, we observe these names that are national in outlook” (Dhlamini *et al.*, 2013:1730). The reason is that names are easily accessible to all corners of the world, and thus, “the names are something that is public knowledge and extensively been a source of public consumption, be it print media, social media and even in government reports” (News 24, 2019/01/17, 15:22pm). And thus, names are temporary commentaries of relevant social moods of an environment. Mphande explains:

Given names comment on more temporary social issues and are thus more relevant in deciphering the social atmosphere at a given time. Apart from indicating an individual’s relationship with a physical and social environment, names are also statements about religion and beliefs of speakers and their relationship with supernatural. Personal names thus provide a barometer for measuring changes in attitudes and moral codes at specific historical epochs (cited in Moyo, 2012:12).

4.3. The name as a referent to the person

According to Dangote, one’s name is very important and is the most valuable asset one has (Aliko Dangote Interview with MTV. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkIJoQqvUQU>). Without the name, one cannot qualify to be something. One’s connection with one’s name is prerequisite to assume a meaningful life. The man is so to say, the visible object while the name is the invisible

signal of the person named. The name is an internal and invisible force that motivates and energises the person. The name operates the person. The two syncs perfectly together. There is a logical connectivity between the two. Searle contends that:

When a name is uttered, both the speaker and the hearer associate some identifying description, that is, a certain aspect of the name's descriptive backing, with it, so that the particular reference that was intended by the use of the name is successfully achieved (cited in Ngidi, 2012:84).

The reason for this connectivity between the name and the person named is that for African people, a name is part and parcel of person's being (Issah *et al.*, 2015:75). A name is something with you but in you. It is something that cannot be borrowed or lost, neither will the named forget it, nor can it be stolen from named because it is attached to the named. The name is the person himself/herself. It is one's personal identity. As shown by Okolo that, "the name, in short, points to the self as an individual, to a person, indeed to who that particular person is" (cited in Coetzee & Roux, 2003:214). To demonstrate the power of the name and the power of representability in a name, I wish to side a dialogue piece in which a conversation ensues between the researcher (Berglund, denoted by B in the dialogue) and the *Sangoma* who is involved in rituals that are intended to kill someone. A *Sangoma* who gets involve in such rituals is often referred to as an *Umthakathi* ('a witch', denoted by U in the dialogue). The art of killing or attempting to harm others by using the Sangoma's rituals is called *ubuthakathi*. In the dialogue below, the *Sangoma (Umthakathi)* explains the power of the name:

- B: ... Everywhere I am told that *Umthakathi* mentions the name of the person who is to be killed. Why does *Umthakathi* mention the name?
- U: ... It is the name of that person.
- B: ... Is it important that the name should be mentioned?
- U: ... It is very important. It is the important thing in *ubuthakathi*. If a man can hide his name from people, then he can hide from much evil. *Umthakathi* can kill a man if he lacks vileness (body-dirt) and hair but has the name. So, the name is very important.
- B: ... Why is the name so important?
- U: ... The name is the person. They are the same, the name and the person. It is the word whereby that person is known. That is the name. So, the person and the name are one. *Umthakathi* kills a man by combining the words of death with the name. He throws (*ukuphonsa*) these at the man and they kill him (cited in Koopman, 2002:17).

This conversation clearly shows that the man and the name are the same. Ambrose Bierce posited that "for every man there is something in the vocabulary that would

stick to him like a second skin. His enemies have only to find it” (cited in Alford, 1988:82). Dickens (1985:37) found that Africans believe that a name is used to work out evil against the bearer. Alford (1988:113) citing *Tlingit* people writes that you can kill someone using his/her name. It is in this context that there is a strong belief among Africans that exposing personal names has a measure of risk. Ngidi (2012:8) found that “there are many man-made illnesses where sorcerers use people’s names to bewitch them”. Agyekum (2006:218) elaborates that:

Names can also carry some aspects of telepathy among the Akan such that in most cases a mention of the name of a person mark the appearance of that individual. The Akans would therefore say that *akoa yi de ne din nam* (‘this man walks with his name’) or *wo din ben wo* (‘your name is closer to you’). It is by this concept of equation between name and personality that make people use names in certain religious divination and sorcery. In water gazing in certain cultures in Africa, it is possible to mention the name of a person and to see his/her image in the water. It is for this same reason that people can curse others during their absence and cast spells on them.

The linkage between man and name is deemed strong and that makes the relationship very strong and crucial. It makes sense that being known is good, but it is high risk. However, being unknown is bad but a safe haven. To sum up the relationship between the two, Ali Mazrui points out that “empirical illustrations of how African names are believed to symbolise the personality of their bearers is present through an *llaje* proverb which says *oruko mi ro nen, apeje mi ro nen* (‘as the name, so is the bearer, like the nickname, like the bearer)’ (Issah *et al.*, 2015:77). Among Africans, it is an impossibility to detach a person from his/her name. An individual is stereotyped in accordance with the semantic meaning of his/her name. Although names appropriately befit their objects as they describe who the object is, at renaming the name ceases to capture the person. It dies. This means that the relationship between the person and the name is not biological, even though it was activated at birth. Once you rename, you maintain standards of the new name. The name’s life cycle to the bearer is not guaranteed because of the possibility to rename.

4.4. Where the power of the name comes from

The naming ceremony creates a very powerful and credible connection between the two, the name and the person named. It glues the two together by creating an intimate

relationship. The two assume jointly, as it were, time and space not in the living world. The one occupies a visible space while the other an invisible space. The connection of the two is effected when “in naming, the official performs the act of naming by saying, ‘I now gives you the name XYZ’, and that becomes the official name of the newly born baby” (Agyekum, 2006:213). A spiritual connection is established between the two. The name connects with the soul of the person because “the naming of a person in Africa is a spiritual event” (Ngidi, 2012:71). Agyekum (2006:218) demonstrated how the connectivity is effected at the naming ceremony:

Baby, you are welcome to this world. Have a longer stay, just do not come and exhibit yourself and return. Your mothers and fathers have assembled here today to give you a name. The name we are giving you is *Afua Ataa Boakyewaa Agyekum*. You are named *Afua* because that is the day your soul decided to enter into this world. We are naming you after your grandmother *Afua Ataa*. Your grandmother is *Ataa* because she was born a twin. Her real name is *Boakyewaa*, the feminine form of *Boakye*. Remember that your grandmother is twin and therefore a deity and sacred figure that must be kept hallowed. In view of this, come and put up a good moral behaviour. Again, we are attaching your father’s name Agyekum to your name. Follow the footsteps of your father and come and study hard.

Maposa & Humbe argue that “the act of naming is so crucial that it can be viewed as the bestowal of a soul on the one who receives the name” (cited in Makondo *et al.*, 2017:3). This ritual is absolutely important because all the anointing that gives the name the power to exert pressure on the bearer’s personality is effected on that day. The ceremony signifies an endowment of new character or personality to the newly named. The functionality of the name begins on that day. The Shona popular saying, *mashoko amunotaura anesimba* (meaning ‘the words that you speak are powerful’) give credence to the belief that the named becomes what the names says. The soul of the named is powered and motivated by the name given and its meaning. The bearer cooperates and operates within the prescription of the name. The description of the name defines the destiny. The journey of life starts there. The destination is the semantic meaning of the name, hence the expectations. The effectiveness of the connection between the name and the named is spiritually and culturally propelled. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, a name has spiritual affiliation as reflected in a popular maxim ‘*agoa onye afa cia analo*’ (‘when a person is given a name his gods or spirit will accept it’) (Issah *et al.*, 2015:82). Orobator claimed that “spirituality portrays the energy that comes from the awareness that human beings are not alone in the universe” (cited

in Makondo *et al.*, 2017:2). This justifies the claim that naming among Africans is a serious event that involves everyone in a family or a group. That is why Dhlamini *et al* (2013:1726) believe that naming is like praying and as praying it portrays the name giver's beliefs. What a name signifies becomes a law to the person named. It becomes a moral law that must be observed at all times. The law in this context is the expectations propounded by the semantic meaning of the name. Failing to meet the expectations amount to transgression of the law, which is tantamount to misconduct. In this case, it is punishable by those who inhabit the spiritual realm. Following the transgression of the law, they maybe punishments of all sorts imposed on the transgressor, including curses and bad lucky. Observing and abiding by the stipulations of the name, as noted by Ngidi (2012:v) may assist one to avoid the anger of the living dead. This mean that names may serve as instrument of preservation of ethical and social values. Issah *et al* (2015:84) explains further:

...names serve as instrument of regulating the general conduct of members of a particular group in that unruly behaviour is not expected of a responsible individual in the society. Individuals who engage in deviant and criminal act are deemed irresponsible, cowards and callous.

In addition, one's name serves as an instruction to follow the connotation implied in one's name. in this sense, a name can also be used as a measure of how much one has complied with the meaning of one's name. Ngidi (2012:92-3) validates:

By receiving a name, the individual implicitly accepts membership in the society and agrees to follow its rules and customs, for example, a person by the name of *Gcinabazali* ('taking care of the parents') is expected to look after his parents when they get older. *Sibani* ('light') is expected to bring light to difficult situations that the family is faced with. A boy by the name of *Qudusizi* ('putting an end to poverty') is believed to be the one who will give his family a better life when he grows up.

Names can therefore raise or lower a person's morale. Names with positive meanings can give the bearer the strength and the bravery to live up to one's name. But names with negative meanings otherwise. They can demoralise a person. A name determines personhood of the child. It defines what kind of a child parents want. The reason is that parents as name givers choose a particular name to convey a meaning of a particular situation they want to be known. The effectiveness of the meaning is powered or backed by supernatural forces which are our ancestral spirits. That is why

in Africa, ancestors are respected because they look after their family members. The ancestors know you through your name. They connect to you through your name. Makondo *et al* (2017:8) corroborates that “one of the ways of maintaining links between the living and *mudzimu* (‘ancestors’) is through naming and showing respect” to ancestors. According to Ngidi (2012:93) “the name is used to introduce the new-born to his or her ancestors during the *imbeleko* ceremony”. Among Africans, the naming of a child is putting him/her into a family system so that he/she can be known and well looked after by the ancestors. Blessings and protection are activated once a child is named. The child will be looked after from this day onwards, because he/she has been registered as an important member of the family. Presumably, the ancestors have a register book for all their family members. I believe that it is through that register or book that one is monitored. No matter where you are, you are within their range. Africans believe that every individual has its own saint that is always with him/her. This begins on the date of the naming ceremony. Ngidi (2012:95) validates that:

After this ceremony of *imbeleko*, living-dead recognise this child because of its name. They act as guardian angels to protect this child. When a sorcerer wants to bewitch a person; the sorcerer calls out the name of that person. The name bearer is affected wherever he/she is because a name forms part of the identity.

Among the Shona, any form of misbehaving can disappoint the family ancestors. To the ancestors, misbehaviour is an offence that is severely punishable. The punishment maybe bad luck. And if you have bad luck, you live a miserable life. Indeed, there is a jury of family ancestors that passes that judgement. Cleansing ceremonies is a defence mechanism were the offender might confess his/her wrong deeds and possibly be forgiven. In criminal law, this act works like someone who turns state witness by confession. The person will be given a lesser sentence or forgiven. If already serving, might be released on parole on grounds of good behaviour. But it all depends on the situation and the matter in question. The living-dead are informed of the arrival of the new member of the family and are asked to protect the child from evil spirits and jealous people (Ngidi, 2012:95).

Demonstrating the seriousness of the name, “parents and those around the child naturally reinforce the message behind a child’s given name especially if a child does not behave according to expectations” as he/she grows up (Gora & Manyarara,

2015:35). Thus, despite its intentions, the name becomes a heavy crown. It is a standard of measuring its bearer. In a narrower sense, the name judges its bearer. The name carries a dual character of merit and demerit. Spiritually, the name becomes a firebrand to self. It may be a significant threat to the bearer.

4.5. Dialogue through names

Names can be used to engage one another in social dialogues. This may seem like something that is farfetched. People use their privilege to name to engage with one another in hidden dialogues. For instance, as shown by Ngidi (2012:v) some may even express their dissatisfaction with one another through naming practices. An example by Ngidi (2012:95) illustrates this dialogical nature of names. She reports that, “a girl was given a name of *Bukani* (‘what are you looking at?’) by one of co-wife because she felt that her co-wives were always looking at her with jealousy. One of the co-wives gave birth to a baby girl and she named her *Nginakenani* (‘why do you worry yourself about what I do?’) as a response to the former”. The ground of enmity is drawn utilising the privilege of naming. This situation, there was a silent infighting between the two co-wives. Clearly, these names have metaphoric undertones. As shown by Mutema & Njanji (2013:252), “metaphors are vehicles of indirectness”. We use metaphors to talk about things in a roundabout manner. Obeng explains further that “there is indirection and ambiguity in African naming traditions and name givers use indirection as a defensive mechanism” (cited in Agyekum, 2006:210). Therefore, metaphors are clever linguistic devices used skilfully to communicate important messages in a way that avoid attracting physical action among fighters. Sengani (2015:1&5) illustrates:

They [Grandmothers] in turn have over the years used the power bestowed upon them to make critical statements to their children or any other person they (dis)agree with through the names that they give to the family’s new-born children...The grandmother decided to name the new baby girl *Mushayathoni* [meaning ‘the one has no shame or is not ashamed’] after her daughter-in-law decided to cut down all the mealies in the grandmother’s field. The daughter-in-law seemingly did not take kindly to being told time and again to stop quarrelling with the co-wives in the family. The old lady considered this indicative of a lack of manners and replied with the name *Mushayathoni*. The hidden polemic is expressed in that whilst the child carries the name, the target

is her mother, the accused who is the mother is not directly mentioned, neither is the shame that is being talked about.

This shows that the African naming practice is dialogical and free emotional expression. Anyone who feels attacked through the process can retribute without posing any danger or risking himself or herself, even though the named maybe emotionally abused in the process. The names are directed to family members. An attack using a name will find a retaliatory attack using a name. Attacking through names is possible and common among African people. Ngidi (2012:95) posited that, “the only advantage is that family members have retaliatory rights in as far as the naming is concerned”. The mutual attack by means of names is often happening in situation of problematical pregnancies (Gora & Manyarara, 2015:37). Sengani (2015:4&6) elaborates that:

However, when the powerless realise this, they too use other voices strategically, to respond in order to resist or emancipate themselves, and then there is a collusion of voices...*Nditsheni* was given to a baby boy whose mother conceived him with a married man. Her parents quarrelled with her as she had caused untold misery in another family, but she became stubborn and answered them through the name of the same child, who she named *Nditsheni* ‘leave me alone’.

This fighting method is very smart because it avoids direct physical confrontation and in nowhere nearer to any misconduct. In this way, names prevent cases of assault even though it promotes insult and silent conflict. Furthermore, the named who is valued but used as an instrument of war is also damaged. It is common knowledge that the child is not the focus, as he/she is innocent.

4.6. Shona conception of personal naming: Overview

In this section of the chapter, I give an overview of Shona conception of personal naming, so as to introduce the reader to the complex dynamism of the subject. A detailed account will be given in the chapters 4,5&6.

The Shona conception of naming also depicts Shona philosophies of life, values, norms, fears and aspirations of the Shona people (Makondo *et al.*, 2017:2) observes that Shona names are linked to Shona culture, that is, the philosophy of life, the values, norms, fears and aspirations of the people. Names indispensably form an important

part of cultural heritage of a people. Shona personal names are one of many means through which the Zimbabwean people express their cultural identity.

In Zimbabwe, the distinction between personal names and surnames is a postcolonial invention. Most of the struggle heroes and heroines of colonial rule in Zimbabwe are referred to by personal names instead of surnames. According to Makoni *et al* (2007:449), Kaguvi, Nehanda and many others were known in their personal or first names. It is shown by Ngidi (2012:133) that, surname (*isibongo*) is the last name which refers to the clan the bearer belongs to. In modern days, it may appear that surnames became very important to all traditions globally. Mateos (2014:33) justified the mass adoption of surnames by expressing that “as compulsory birth registration practices have slowly spread to the most remote rural areas, hereditary surname has been gradually accepted by a majority of the population”. Of course, like names, surnames have their etymological histories. Some originated from language, totems, clan names and so on, depending on the ethnic group in question. According to Makoni *et al* (2007:450):

Africans use English names as personal names and yet rarely are English surnames used in Zimbabwe among blacks. Among first generation Malawian Zimbabweans, the use of English personal names or common names as surnames is popular. These were either the names that were given to them by their white employers or, in some cases, they may have picked the names as a result of interaction with their employers or members of their employer's family. The names then became surname for their children. As a result, there are ethnic differences in the propensity to use English non-standard names as surnames between Shona and Ndebele, and Malawian Zimbabweans.

One of my former female classmates named *Fortunate Waterbath* is a perfect example of someone who used an English personal name. She was a Malawian Zimbabwean. Although I highlighted the origins of surnames in Zimbabwe, this is not the focus of this study. The study strictly focuses on the conception of personal names. The use of surnames is foreign to the Shona people, even though it enjoyed popularity since its inception and adoption.

The Shona people of Zimbabwe like other African nations, have one of the interesting cultures of personal naming. Most of their names are reference to specific events, sometimes to specific entities such as God or ancestors, or family set up. Nowadays, many parents prefer Shona names. The names are a meaningful message to certain

audience. Explaining the conception of naming, beginning with an example of Shona philosophy of given names might be helpful to understand the conception of Shona names. The literal meaning of Shona names is taken seriously as exemplified in the dramatic turn of events between *Oliver Mtukudzi's* daughter (*Selmor*) and her stepmother (*Daisy*), after *Mtukudzi* died. The two were fighting over the legacy of *Mtukudzi*. The media captured this as follows: “if *Daisy* is doing so to fight *Selmor* over her father’s music, then she defies the meaning of her name: a beautiful flower” (*Reporters263*, 2019/02/23). Clearly in this story, *Daisy* did not live up to her name. According to Eggins, Shona personal names maybe understood as functional labels and as such classified items of the role they play in the society (cited in Makondo *et al.*, 2017:4). This prompted Magudu *et al* (2014:74) to affirm that indeed names play an identity making role and that at times they can tell a story. Names describe characters and attributes of a person, a clan or nation. Wagner (cited in Meiring) writes, “the process of naming can be described as the transmission of knowledge, episodes and foresights ... stored in timeless propositions. These propositions can be used as a key to recover the motivational elements behind the name as a product of human mind” (cited in Ngidi, 2012:125-6). There is also a strong belief of magical powers in names. Shona people have great respect for names. Names are given with meanings for meaningful purposes. This means that Shona names are circumstantially and purposefully given. Pongweni explains that:

Shona names, like those of other cultures (particularly African) are essentially expressions of some experience or attitudes, both family and national. In analysing them, therefore, one is essentially engaged in linguistic investigation with social and political considerations predominantly at various points (cited in Mushati, 2013:85).

The naming is not constant itself but continuously changing.in constant. Shona naming practices are forever transforming because they accommodate the changing social situations. The plurality of situations, from politics to economics, then from social to cultural are reflected in the Shona naming tradition. It is those changes that make names temporary and push them in and out of fashion on daily basis. Finch recognises that “a given name has a dual role, that is personal and communal [in] function” (cited in Ngubane & Thabethe, 2013:2). This the state of affairs of the Shona people in relation to personal names. The communal function embodies a variety of sub-functions, which are not limited to personhood, nor communication nor security but

extends to all facets of life. The Shona concept of naming is dynamic. The naming system involves all situations. Every situation fits a certain family. Since family situations are different, different names are produced. With this approach, Shona people produce a multiplicity of names. The Shona naming system is very stylish. It is very rare to name a Shona child just for the sake of naming. All names are intended to assume one or more meanings. They believe that something must be communicated through the name. Mere naming looks like an unjust act since they believe that within the family or community, there must be good or bad news that must be told, documented and communicated to other people. People have achievements and also have problems, thus naming is one of the easiest and fastest way to share these stories. Junod elaborates further:

There are many ways of giving a child a name. Everyone who has studied a Bantu tribe knows that in olden times, there were definite rules about naming a child and that the name itself was a proverb. A mother will often give her child a name like '*Vuloyi*', that is, witchcraft, a challenge to the public opinion, showing that she defies the verdict of the witch doctor (cited in Ngidi, 2012:131-2).

The Shona people believe that their life is characterised by positive or negative developments. These developments cannot go unattended. Naming is therefore used to assist in that situation. Hence, we find that, in names, people recognise the truth of what is happening or might have happened. This is regarded as oral documentation. As explained by Moji (2015:7), "naming is also used to anchor the story in a Zimbabwean location". This is however not unique of Zimbabweans as shown by Ngidi (2012:1) that "Zulu people consider their state of affairs and their well-being, before giving names to their children".

Gora & Manyarara (2015:34) also contents that some Shona names maybe regarded as repositories of human experience while others as argument by proxy. Perhaps, this is done to avoid a tedious task of having to go to each person in and out of your vicinity to inform them of one's achievements. Supposedly, naming a child is the smartest way to avoid the above. Sometimes people are forced to bear more children in order to breakout the news regarding their life achievements. The same thing as been observed among the Akan people of Ghana. Agyekum (2006:208) claimed that most African societies have similar naming practices that correspond to that of Akan. This is a confirmation of cultural similarities amongst the African nations.

Shona names can be regarded as news heralds, in the family and the community at large. They are like gauges of the state of our families and communities. They can announce, for example the state of (dis)unity in our societies and serve warnings about impending dangers. They can show the state of joy, pain and disappointments experienced in our families and society at large. Some names have a national agenda Mushati (2013:74) shows:

Through this naming process, parents are participating in the creation of a sense of nationhood. Some names denigrate the ills of colonialism as it denied Africans political, economic and social space. This explains the prevalence of names such as *Tafirenyika* ('we died for the land') and *Sibangilizwe* ('we are quarrelling over the land question').

In Zimbabwe, political, economic and social changes were all recorded in children names. The sentiments expressed through personal naming was a motivating method, a voice calling for transformation of political, economic and social activities that was deemed unjust and terrifying the local people. Dhlamini *et al* (2013:1726, 1727) expounds that:

The naming process then became an avenue to register all the anger and resentment brewed by such torture. Giving names such as *Mabutho* ('armies/soldiers'), *Butholezwe* ('army of the nation'), *Mayihlome* ('let's take up arms'), *Melimpi* ('stand up for war'), *Thulilwempi* ('the dust of war'), *Dumolwempi* ('the ubiquity of war'), *Hlaselani* ('you should attack'), *Qoqanani* ('organise yourselves'), militarised and radicalised everyone as every person came to be viewed as a soldier. These names perceive violence as a means to securing freedom.

The names above have political overtones. They do what Sengani (2015:8) has described as "names [that] create ideological voices". The logic in giving these names was inspired by the observation of an unbearable environment as a result of political oppression. These names were an empowering mechanism aimed at calling for forceful and thoughtful actions. The ideology was to resent and repel colonial occupation. Thus, the names have ideological impact to transform a colonial hegemony to a decolonised society. That shows the ideological importance of names as they were used as a decolonisation tool. As smart signals, names united people against a common enemy. Vambe, and Beach cited in (Barnes & Pfukwa, 2010:209-210) contends that:

A war name can be regarded as a text carrying a story about a war and identity of the bearer. A war name was embedded in the history of resistance to a political system that disadvantaged the majority of the population. The wars of resistance to British rule (1893 – 1896) were given the local name “*Chimurenga*”. This name derived from the name of a Zimbabwean Chief of *Munhumutapa* Dynasty, *Murenga Soro Renzou*. The name *Murenga* is opaque and *Soro Renzou* means ‘the head of an elephant’ in Shona.

The achievements of ideological and strategical naming were independence. After independence circumstances changed. Mushati (2013:85) noted that, celebrating the new era, the orientations brought in names like:

Rusununguko (‘freedom’) is a celebration of independence resultant from a protracted and brutal struggle. The name *Rusununguko* affirms the end of minority rule, the triumph of blacks over whites and the dawning of a new era of self-determination. It also facilitates the interrogation of the importance of power in determining human experiences. Independence has thus empowered blacks.

At post-independence, naming changed its course of direction. More focus was given to family life which had now become relatively stable. Names reflected different family circumstances. The family is a dynamic social unity with varying experiences, from sadness to happiness, depending on the circumstance of the time. For this reason, many parents named their children according to the experience of the family. Mutema & Njanji (2013:254) throws some more light on the issue:

To show the aspect of joy, parents and families give their off springs names that are semantically pregnant. The name *Tapiwa* is a declaration that ‘we have been given this child, so we are happy’. For instance, if the couple has been childless, they will be telling the world that look, we have been given the long-awaited baby just as you were given yours. *Tanaka* means ‘it is well with us’, and is normally given to the boy child.

Okere (1995) describes the naming above as “appreciation of the blessing or gift of the child as greater than any other that one could ever wish”.

4.7. Conclusion

Personal naming in Africa is an important practice that is given maximum attention and respect. The chapter discussed about African naming traditional practices in

general. It further showed the dynamic and mutual relationship between a name and its referent. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrated on where the power of names come from. In addition, the chapter attempted to show that names are used as a form of dialogue between people. The chapter concluded by giving an overview of the Shona conception of personal naming.

Chapter 5

Philosophical discourse of Shona personal names

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses Shona personal name from a philosophical point of view. The chapter shows that among Shona people names are formulated from a plurality of causes for different intentions. The chapter discusses different reasons that inform various formulations of personal names. Chief among them include emotions, prevailing circumstances, desired characters, and historical epochs. These demonstrate that naming is dynamic among the Shona people.

5.2. Historicity of Shona personal names

Among Africans particularly Shona people, the outlook of a name is identification, but the focus of a name is the inner meaning equipped in that name. Thus, on a strict sense, a name goes beyond its normal usage and how it is publicly understood. To diagnose the meanings of names, Lombard states that, “in addition to their nominative function, names contain as well as communicate socio-cultural meaning, based on their associations with a wide range of non-linguistic factors which form part of the socio-cultural environment within which they are used” (in Ngidi, 2012:18). According to Mateos (2014: 81) “a name is a repository of accumulated meanings, practices and beliefs, a powerful linguistic means of asserting identity ... and inhabiting a social world” (cited in Mateos, 2014:81). It is further described as follows, “names form part of dynamic linguistic systems used by real people in real space and time. They possess what has been variously termed “onomastic meaning”, “connotative meaning”, “associative meaning” and “descriptive backing”, (cited in Ngidi (2012:96). These expressions bring to light the fact that names are more meaningful in the context within which they are used. According to the explanations above, it looks clear that personal names have meanings more than their popularly known identification role. In supporting the belief of name meanings among Africans, Suzman simply asserted “that the criterion of meaningfulness as a distinguishing factor between African names and their Western counterpart, which she describes as mere labels” (cited in Makoni

et al., 2007:452), effectively demonstrate a pure gap that there is indeed a meaning in a name in African names and the opposite is true in all respect.

Makondo *et al* (2017:2) clearly put it that “Shona personal names, like most African names, are meaningful”. McDowell elaborates that “behind a name is a vast social matrix of numerous social attitudes and perceptions that give the name wider shades of meaning” (in Barnes & Pfukwa, 2010:211). Mushati (2013:86) explains further that “names can be read as literary texts which are comparable and open to a multiplicity of interpretations, meanings and, or (mis)readings”.

Names have descriptive codes. They are means of instructing to separate beings. According to Mateos (2014:23), “personal names are in principle good indicators of ethnicity, at in relation to the immediately prior generations, that gave the forename to their descendants and probably exercised some preference in the surname”. In that sense, naming can be a screening method. Names align people with their groupings. It is easy to identify whether a person is a Zimbabwean, South African, Malawian, Zambian, Ghanaian, Nigerian, Namibian, and so on, through names. It is easier to identify a Shona, Ndebele, Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Akan, Ovambo, Yoruba, Igbo or any other tribal groups through names. Mateos (2014:23) writes that “names can probably be viewed as a kind of ‘self-assignment’ of ethnicity that is likely to have strong links to the language, culture and geography of a person’s ancestry”. For example, “... the first born of the three children, it is not known if *Tinashe* or her siblings *Thulani* and *Kudzai* have ever been in Zimbabwe, although their Zimbabwean names point to a father very proud of his roots” (Zimlive, 2019/04/20, 03:41pm). Their names are symbolic to their original identities despite their current residence. “The fact that personal names symbolise individual identities is especially evident when we compare personal naming systems across cultures” (Alford, 1988:51). “Those who had two names considered themselves ‘bi-cultural’ and thought that their names were a significant marker of their identity as distinctively Zimbabwean” (Makoni *et al.*, 2007:459-460).

The dynamism of Shona personal names can be attributed to intellectual creativity of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. Even Ngidi, who researched about the significance of Zulu names affirms that “Shona first names came as a result of unparallel anthroponomastic and linguistic innovation displayed by the Shona people” (2012:19). The Shona people create names from both natural and humanly induced

circumstances assisted by linguistic forms such as language. Some natural circumstances may include but not limited to geographical and historical setups. Humanly induced circumstances include social, economic and political behaviours around the child who is to be named. Moyo (2012:12) concurs that “names give more information about the natural conditions that were prevailing and the social context in which the individual was born”. Dhlamini *et al* (2013:1726) elaborates that:

Children are given names circumstantially. The circumstances are as diverse as could be imagined, but it is noted that dominant prevailing natural and human engineered circumstances at the time of birth or pregnancy, play a significant role in determining name choices.

Shona people believe that naming is a skilful method of communication. Sengani (2015:9) throws some light on that, when he remarks that “it is important to note that in any discourse, there is a speaker and an addressee(s) on a particular topic”. Thus, Shona names are like discursive topics of strategic importance, because in themselves, they are carriers of important stories. Among the Igbo people of Nigeria, similar findings have been noted by Okere (1995) that, “Igbo names always bear a message, a meaning, a history, a record, or a prayer. This is also to say that they embody a rich mine of information on the people’s reflection and considered comments on life and reality”.

Names among the Shona people have been the social platform of communication about the past, the present and the future activities of the people. Due to poor communication methods, names have been helping people to keep information of everything that have been happening in the country, communities and or families. The naming practice serve as the voice of both the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the urban and the rural, in fact, all classes, and all areas within the nation. Like every other Africans, Shona people have a tendency of telling everyone what they have, what they are doing, what happened to them, or what they are going to do. Their only simple and cheap ways of reporting about their lives, is through baby naming. Mondende submitted that “the naming process in Africa is [intended] to pass a message or information from the name-giver to the entire family and the community at large” (cited in Issah *et al.*, 2015:77). The messages are communicated in different ways. For example, the name *Zivanai*, literally meaning ‘know each other’, was given to a baby boy by her grandmother. The

grandmother was concerned with the situation prevailing in her family, wherein members did not know each other well, and could not visit or help one another. They behaved like distance relatives, and yet they were close relatives. The name *Zivanai* was a corrective act to that behaviour as it encouraged family members and relatives to reach out to each other. In another case, the father named his son *Knowledge*. Both parents were highly educated, apparently the father was a professor and the mother a doctor. The name served two different purposes in this regard. Firstly, it confirmed or called attention to the status of the parents by depicting their very occupations. Secondly, it challenged the named to follow in the footsteps of his parents, as it was not going to appear good that the parents of the named are educated but the referent is not. Shona people believe that a name befits the situation, and the situation befits the named. Accordingly, the child 'Knowledge' has his path of life chosen and has no choice but to follow it. As his name is 'Knowledge' he has to acquire as much knowledge as is possible.

Within the family setup, names can be used to express gratitude. For instance, husbands can use appropriate names on their children to thank their wives for bearing them children (Makondo *et al* 2017:8). Accordingly, names such as *Mazvita* (meaning 'thank you'), *Maita* (thank you), *Matipa* ('you have given us'), *Matigonera* ('you have done us good'), *Matidadisa* (you have done us proud), *Matinyaradza* ('you have comforted us'), and many others are used to express this sense of appreciation (*ibid*).

There are also situations in families in which women can be very dissatisfied with their male partners. For example, names like *Nhamoinesu* (meaning 'woe is with us'), *Hamunyari* ('you are not ashamed') or *Takatadzei* ('what have we done wrong') are commonly found in problematic family situations especially in polygamous marriages. These names are often given by co-wives. For instance, the first wife can name her son *Nhamoinesu* in reference to the behaviour of her husband who might happen to have married a third wife without permission of his other wives. This aggrieved (first) wife may express self-pity to herself by naming her son *Nhamoinesu*. In addition to that, the second wife can name her daughter *Hamunyari* in reference to the same situation but in this case confronting her husband telling him for the shame he has brought to the family by marrying the third wife. By using the name *Hamunyari*, the second wife may be questioning her husband to find out if his act of marrying a third wife was an expression of dissatisfaction with his two wives. Similarly, the name

Hamunyari may be used in reference to the third wife, especially if she is of young age, to interrogate her why she is not ashamed by her behaviour of coming to a married man who has already had two wives. Interestingly, the third wife might choose to retort by naming her child *Takatadzei*, questioning the relevance and importance of the squabbles of the first two wives. The names used in the squabble above echo Okere's (1995) remarks that "names invoke, promise, threaten, praise, revile, satirize, and sympathise, [and] that in fact express and demonstrate all that is human, that is all that is best and worst in them".

Names function like folktales in that, they are explanatory of an important event of the past. The usage of the names re-enacts the event. The newly named person thus, act as a reminder of that particular important event. In that order, a person's name is intimately associated with the referenced event and thus typically act as a marker of that period.

In a name there is a story. Okere (1995) found that "the vast majority of names given to babies are really abbreviated statements of meaning and significance, interpretations of life's experience or of events in history of the family". This is the same view propounded by Bertrand Russell that "the name refers to a description, and that description, like a definition, picks out the bearer of the name. The description then functions as an abbreviation or truncated form of the description" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proper_name_philosophy). Names are created from different unique situations. That makes names to become unique and varied. Names come about as a result of name givers who respond differently from those situations. Names are the products of those responses. According to Maposa & Humbe, "every name is assigned to an individual in response to a certain historical situation in which human beings are participants" (cited in Makondo *et al.*, 2017:2). Positive and negative names are often given according to how these historical situations are affecting the name givers. Accordingly, positive names would suggest that a particular historical event affected the name giver positively. Conversely, negative names are a result of negative affectivity. This then, suggests that there is no one rigid formula for naming among the Shona people. Agyekum (2006:208) validates, "African names are generally not predictable, for until the child is born and under what circumstances it is born, the name cannot be determined with accuracy". Generally, people are given names that tell stories about parental struggles, fears, hopes aspirations and are

believed to be injunctions that have an influence on the named persons (Makondo *et al.* 2017: 1). For example, a child may be named 'Hardlife' to reflect his parents' struggles when they were young. Another may be named 'Goodness' to show how life was good to the parents of the child.

Shona personal names are categorised in such a way that they show animosity, joy, polygamous infighting, general life problems, expression of faith and many other situations (Mutema & Njanji 2013:251). Names like *Muchaneta* (meaning 'you will be tired') and *Revai* ('you can talk') are indicative of gossip situation in a household. Often, in this situation the name giver is a woman who is responding to a negative reporting by her mother-in-law who is speaking behind her back to her husband. The names are reflective of an 'I do not care attitude', which is a position taken against the mother-in-law. A name like *Tererai* (meaning 'listen') is given by parents who may be instructing their child to follow their moral directives if the child wants to succeed in life. While *Kurai* ('grow') expresses a wish that the child must grow and see what the world is having for him/her.

Names can also be used to reflect political reality and aspirations of the people. At independence many Shona people made use of Afro-English for their babies such as *Hope, Freedom, Vote, Unity* and so forth, for their babies to reflect the mood of the time. These names echo a political freedom mood of happiness and the once hoped for new era. The names above are equivalent to those of South Africans at the era of their political freedom, wherein names such as *Nkululeko* (meaning 'freedom'), *Nonkululeko* ('mother of freedom'), *Sibakhulule* ('we have liberated them'), *Sikhululekile* ('we are free'), *Silithethe* ('we have taken it – our country'), *Zwelethu* ('our land'), *Busani* ('rule'), and many others, became fashionable (Dhlamini *et al.*, 2013:1729). This is not unique of Shona people and South Africans to name their children as such. Malawians also had the same practise. Moyo (2012:13-4) elaborates: "Names such as *Kamuzu* or *Kwacha* or *Wanangwa*, all means 'freedom', *Unika* ('Shine'), all symbolises the birth of freedom, given to children at independence in 1964, Malawi."

Shona names have the behaviour of showing the exact period when a person was born. This shows the importance of names as they give time of every events happening in the country. Thus, names are a very good calendar. An accurate and

efficient watch. The accuracy is determined by unique details that is embedded in a name as it points out to a specific date and event. The main advantage is that it is the watch that is easily understandable and interpreted even by illiterate people. It helps the illiterate to read oral history. The history cannot be forgotten because it is daily spoken. The more the name is mentioned, the better the history is learnt and the more firm such a history stays in people's mind.

Dureen & Green (2016:63) mentioned four broad categories that are mostly considered by the Shona people when naming children, and classify them as follows:

- (1) names that define the positive and negative emotions, for example, *Everjoy, Joyce, Progress, Persist, Proud, Happiness* and many others;
- (2) names based on the defining circumstances, for example, *Causemore, Truth, Honesty, Chaos, Agreement, Idea* and so forth;
- (3) names based on the anticipated or desired character, for example, *Superior, Pretty, Courage, Obey, Gracious, Prudence* and so on, and lastly;
- (4) names based on historical events or topical characters, for example, *Victoria, Adolph, Soames, Churchill, Roosevelt, Caesar* and the likes.

These categories of names show that although parents want contemporary names for their children, they also wanted these names to reflect their embedded meaning and to be socially relevant (Ngubane & Thabathe 2013:4).

5.3. Emotional naming

Some Shona names are emotionally coined. The stories behind emotional naming is very interesting in the sense that they are depictive of the relationship between family members. The highly charged emotions are often a characteristic of polygamous marriage. According to Mutema & Njanji (2013:253) names such *Togarasei* (meaning 'how will we live - we have been disturbed') result from a situation of conflict brought about by a man who marries a second wife, thereby prompting feelings of jealous, resentment, competition and anger between the two wives. The name *Togarasei* expresses feelings of despair. The mother feels disturbed by a polygamous situation. She emotionally questions the suitability and comfortability of the environment and wonders if it is sustainable. As a matter of fact, the degree of volatility in a polygamous situation is very high. She is disheartened, and emotionally doubtful of possible good

co-habitation with her co-wife. She then uses a name to voice her frustrations. The name *Togarasei* expresses a philosophical question where both reason and emotion are applied. The name is an indirect commentary on the new marriage situation. This name represents a reaction by the first wife on the deeds of the husband who seen to have invited problems to his family. Since in this situation, there is no option of getting even, opting for a name to voice one's disapproval is the only way out (Ngidi, 2012:v). Afro-English names may also be used to express negative emotions. For instance, since in some Shona families, male children maybe preferred more than female children, in the event that a female child is born, the father might express his disappointment by naming her newly born daughter *Sorrowful*. Ngidi (2012:9) maintains that such names are used to let out anger and frustrations on the part of the aggrieved. In other words, these names may have a catharsis on the complainants.

In some other family situations, a father may raise questions about the paternity of his wife's child. This maybe a situation in which a father doubts if he really fathered such a child. Therefore, there be an unexpressed suspicion on the part of the father on the faithfulness of his wife. This is one of the occasions that may call the naming of the child with such names as 'Question' and 'Godknows'. This means that names like 'Question' and 'Godknows' are attributed to a child who is born under unclear situations where there is distrust in the family, or there are some suspicions of unfaithful behaviour on the part of the wife. These names are an indirect protest against the infidelity of the wife

Shona personal names also express positive emotions. Names in this category maybe the following: *Tafara* (meaning 'we are happy'), 'Happiness', *Tinotenda* ('we are grateful'), 'Delight', *Tatenda* ('thank you') and many others. Such names maybe expressing ecstatic father's reaction after getting a long-awaited male offspring"

On the other hand, a bad name is a prediction of bad life. Etymologically, bad names are caused by negative experiences of the family, especially on the side of the mother. Among Shona people, history has shown that, "while the mother may not be physically sick, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, negative thoughts, a perceived meaningless of life and anxiety are some of the symptoms that may predispose a woman to both antenatal and postnatal depression, leading to a woman giving a child a "bad name" or to infanticide, according to Watson (cited in Gora & Manyarara, 2015:39). Situations

like these could bring in names like *Nhamo* (meaning 'suffering'), *Dambudzo* ('trouble') and so on. Names like these are poverty hotpots. In Ngidi's (2012:153-4) words, "bad naming sometimes is a result of names that allege that the children are bastards. For example, *Muntukabani* ('whose child is this?') the name was given by the mother in response to the father's allegations about her being unfaithful and him not being the father". That is why she puts it that "names sometimes refer to the 'state of mind' of the parents" (Ngidi, 2012:9). Koopman (2002:39) elaborates further:

Names referring to the "state of mind" of the parents in the central reaches of Africa are frequently negative. Such names refer to the constant imminence of sorrow, death, poverty or misfortune. In societies which see frequent stillbirth, or loss of child in its early years as the jealousy of neighbours, co-wives or ancestral spirits, it is uncommon for the child to be given a name which means 'who wants him?', 'turn your back on him' or 'cast him out'. Such names are meant to mislead the 'jealousy powers' into thinking that it will be no harm to the parents to take the child away as it is unwanted anyway. A variation of this thinking is seen when a far greater proportion of boy children are just lost in birth or their early days.

Among Shona people of Zimbabwe, similar findings have been registered by Gora & Manyarara (2015:37) that:

Seeming naming of some strong feelings likely to have surrounded the named person's birth includes: Anyway, Anywhere, Doubt, Forget, Hatred, Jealous, Last, *Maida-ani* ('who did you want?'), Maybe, Mistake, *Murambiwa* ('the rejected one'), Never, Obvious, Pretence, Takesure and Talkmore.

The name *Crymore* shares the same qualities with its relative names mentioned above. Despite the intention, these names look not good to the bearer. Ngidi noted the effects of this as follows, "the underlying meaning of a name informs the way in which people perceive the name and the name-bearer. This leads to stereotypical perceptions of that name and stereotypical expectations on the name-bearer's lifestyle and achievements in life" (2012:86-7). This led to the people to prejudge, hence they prejudice the bearer. For example, "*Mabenzi* means 'problem' in Tonga, in ChiShona means 'fools' or 'mad people', the bearer did not like his name because of its meaning not the language because everyone construes his name from a ChiShona perspective" (Makoni *et al.*, 2007:459). For Gora & Manyarara (2015:40), "names such as Mistake and *Murambiwa* are a much safer outlet for a mother's feeling but perhaps an immeasurably hurtful burden too far for the named". Moji (2015:7) gave an example of

the consequence of bad naming for a child named 'Bastard', the child influenced by the connotation of his name became the bully of the group. Looking at the intention and the happening, it came to be a true prophet. He was named 'Bastard' and indeed, his personality evolves in that name. The fact that he is bully is self-explanatory. It therefore suggests that the name can cause collateral damage. It is very clear, the name demand, disrupt and destroys the individual named. Because the character is the person. The person is the individual named. A bad name can dent a person's image especially girls. If the name sounds strange, boys will be discouraged to make love overtures. It is like tainting and painting something black. The dent is visibly shown. Who can buy a car seen as new but with a dent? Indeed, "such names may not give the named a sense of being cherished if they have to bear a name that draws mockery or other negative responses.

5.4. Names as expression of desire

In contemporary times, many Shona parents prefer to give their children Shona names. In those names, they freely express their expectations in life or what they expect their children to be in life. These personal names are bestowed to encourage desired characteristics. Often these names reflect the aspirations of the parents. That means most of Shona names may well reflect the parents' desires, hopes, and ambition. Makondo *et al* (2017:2) noted that "whoever gives a name to a Shona child has to think about what he/she is wishing the child to be in the family and the community at large". For example, names like *Dzidzai* (meaning 'be studious'), *Pfumai* ('be rich'), *Ngwarai* (meaning 'be wise'), Success, *Ruramai* ('behave well') and many others. In a similar logic, in Malawi, a name like *Chiembekezo*, which means 'hope and expectation', expresses the parents' or the village peoples' hope that the newly born will give a renewed life and hope for the future to come (Moyo, 2012:13). Ngidi (2012:88) as shown the same idea to be existing among the Zulu speaking people of South Africa.

Wishful names reflect the parents' choice of a name for their new-born child and the kind of life parents hope their children will live.

Ngidi cites the following points above to demonstrate the made above:

Nobuhle ('mother of beauty', that name-bearer will be a beautiful person),

Nompumelelo ('mother of success', that the name-bearer will be successful in everything she does), *Nomfundo* ('mother of education', that the name-bearer will be intelligent and well educated (*ibid*))

What the parents desire and which for by the name given to the child does not automatically for the child. The child who is given such a name must apply him or herself to work hard in order that the name maybe realised. This implies that the combination of a positive connotation from a name with hard work from the bearer of the name may guarantee success. Thus, a name cannot work alone, it needs your support to realise its meaning. Both the bearer of the name and the name itself have an important role to play to bring about what is desired or wished for. As a precautionary measure, Ngidi (2012:88) warned that:

Even though it is believed that the name shapes the life of the name-bearer, this is not always the case. It should be noted that parents' wishes are not always realised. There are people with the name Nompumelelo who are not successful, and those with the name *Nobuhle* who are not beautiful.

We have Shona people with names such as 'Prosper' and 'Richman' to mention only two who are not success neither rich in their lives despite the meaning of their names. A wish is nothing more than a wish, hence it cannot be translated into a permit for success. Similarly, names such *Ruramai* (behave well) and *Dzidzai* (be studious) in themselves do not guarantee what the namer wishes for or desire without the hard work of those named. In most cases, wishes would become mere wishes if they are not accompanied by appropriate actions on the part of those named. The writer of the present dissertation is no exception to the group of those who wish and desire something by the names of their children. He named his daughters Clergy and Cleric because he wished them to be church ministers or pastors. And he also named the other one Clerisy because he wanted her to be intelligent and highly educated as the name suggests. Ngidi (2012:92) describes this as "projected connotations, meaning names which are closely linked with the expectations of the parents".

Names like *Chengetanai* (meaning 'look after one another') and *Dananai* ('love each other'), both unisex, suggest that the parents are expressing a wish or desire for the children to be united and caring for another. This wish becomes even stronger as the parents grow older. Koopman (2002:42) asserted that, in these names, parents are providing some kind of moral direction for the child. The naming gives the bearer the responsibility to continue to raise the family name by taking care of one another so

that the family thrives. The assigned the duty must not be ignored. Ignoring the duty is deviation from the instruction to look after the family. Shona people believe that violation of parents' wishes can be negatively consequential.

There is another category in which parents wish and desires are expressed as political mandates. In such cases, the name expresses an instruction to exercise a political role. These names are more widespread among families of political figures, such as Kings, Chiefs and or politicians. The following maybe cited as examples: *Tungamirai* (meaning 'you must rule'), *Tongai* ('rule'), *Chatunga* ('fighter'), *Magamba* ('Heroes') and many others. The names above, not only do they express particular wishes for the names, but they also instruct the names to care for others. This idea is also expressed by Zulu names. For example: *Mkhululi* (meaning 'the liberator') who has the task to liberate others; *Bhekisizwe* ('watch the nation') who is tasked to undertake a political role of watching over the nation; *Nosizwe* ('mother of nations') who is given the task of taking care of everyone, and so on. The names above are expected to influence, mould and shape the character and personality of its bearer (Issah *et al.*, 2015:73). Although these names express the namer's desire or wishes for the child named, their meanings if followed might help create the desired reality conveyed in the name (Alford, 1988:63). Names as expression of desires by name givers can be found also in the following categories:

1. *Christian Faith*: Christians gave name such as *Hope, Godslowe, Mercy, Blessing, Charity, Faith* and many others.
2. *Education*: Education and related fields are reflected in names such as *Alphabet, Doctor, Effort, Excel, Genius, Prize and Professor*.
3. *Law*: Legal systems provided names such as *Barrister, Judge, Justice, Lawyers* and *Mayor* (Dickens, 1985:14,92&93).

The names above, although full of promises they require the named to work hard in order for these names to be realised.

5.5. Naming from historical events

One of the interesting cultural activity among the Shona people is that they capture history in their personal names. This makes it easy for both literate and illiterate people to read their history. Dureen & Green's (2016:61) affirm this in their remark that "some names were inspired by topical events at the time of birth". As explained by Akinnaso, names are drawn from events related to the environment, history, politics, economy and the local community (in Sengani, 2015:2). In essence, the Shona people of Zimbabwe named their children after popular historical figures or personalities and after historical events themselves. These historical figures and events maybe local or international. The practice of naming children after historical figures and events is also practices among the Zulus of South Africa. Dickens testifies to this when she asserts that "names reflecting local and international historical events and historical makers as well as literal figures like Hitler, Milton, Napoleon and many others, dominated the Zulu naming systems" (1985:13). There are two categories of names of historical figures among the named children in Zimbabwe. The first category of names is drawn from names of European figures. During the colonial era, Shona people named their children after famous Europeans who were on top of the log overseeing the occupation of Zimbabwe. Some of these names were from names royal families, missionaries and politicians. Examples of popular names in this category are the following: Elizabeth, Mary, Victoria, Charles, Edward, George, Queen, King, Prince, Princess; Moffatt, Rudd, Concession; Goncalo, Silveira; Cecil, Rhodes, Margret, Lord Soames, Ian, Smith and many others. Deeds, positions and achievements of these people named above inspired most parents to name their children after them and sometimes wishing that they will assume the character displayed by these European figures.

The second category of names of historical figures is drawn from Shona historical figures. Notable example among others, may include the following: *Chaminuka*, *Nehanda*, *Nyakasikana*, *Kaguvu*, *Murenga*, *Mashayamombe*, Robert, Solomon, Josiah, Joshua, Herbert, *Shuvai*, *Urayayi*, *Kumbirai*, *Tichafa*, Edgar, Sabina, *Tichaona*, Edson, *Mudadirwa*, *Chenjerai*, and many others. The above names are legendary figures in the political struggle for freedom in Zimbabwe. Shona people named their children after the legendary figures. Parents were admiring the role (dis)played by these distinguished figures during war times. These were "commemorative names that are given to children in order to record history" as shown

by Sengani (2015:8). The name givers seem to recognise their (former) heroes and forerunners in the children who are named after these figures. These names are as pointed out by Okere (1995) “historical statements”.

As already alluded, Shona children are named after historical figures and events. I now wish to focus my discussion on names drawn from significant historical events, local and abroad. Zimbabweans and Shona people in particular are historical beings. They live in history and at the same time are makers of history. They name their children after some events of history that had become important to them as an aid to remember those events, they coin personal names to be their mimesis. I herein wish to cite some few examples of historical and the corresponding names drawn from such events.

1. *Second Chimurenga (also known as Rhodesian bush war)*: This war took place between 1967-1979. Black nationalists of Zimbabwe under the Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo confronted white minority government Ian Smith. This event brought forth the coinage of the following names among the Shona people: *Nyikadzino* (meaning ‘our country’), *Hondo* (‘war’), *Gamba* (‘hero’), *Urayayi* (‘kill’), *Paradzai* (‘destroy’), *Battle*, *Struggle*, *Liberation*, *Fighter*, *Masoja* (‘soldiers’) and many others.

2. *Political independence*: Zimbabwean political struggle was finally concluded in the ushering of independence on 18 April 1980. This political event evoked many interesting names for Shona children. The following are among the popular names: *Freedom*, *Rusununguko* (meaning ‘freedom’), *Vote*, *Independence*, *Totonga* (‘we are ruling’), *Tongai* (‘rule’), *Tafara*, (‘we are happy’), *Happiness* and so on.

3. *Unity Accord between ZANU and ZAPU*: In 1987 major political parties of Zimbabwe made an agreement to as one party with the name ZANU-PF. This event attracted the following names: *Agreement*, *Unity*, *Batanai* (‘unity’)

4. *1992 Drought*. Zimbabwe was hit by a severe drought. This was regarded the worst drought in living memory in the region of Southern Africa. In order to remember this challenging period, Shona people gave their new-born the following names: *El Nino*, *Nzara* (meaning ‘drought’), *Drought*, *Nhamo* (‘suffering’), *Survivor*, *Nhamoinesu* (‘suffering with us’), *Memory*, *Remember*, *Hardlife* and so on.

5. *Formation of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)*: A new political wave swept over Zimbabwe in 1990 when Morgan Tsvangirai formed a new opposition party which seem to have gained immense popularity. Many Zimbabweans named their children after this political party that brought a new political climate in the country. The following names echoed this event: *Movement*, *Tsvangirai* ('a reference to Morgan Tsvangirai'), *Morgan*, *Chinja* ('change') and many others.

6. *The Bombing of America's Twin Tower Buildings and the election of Barrack Obama as President of the United States of America*: The spectacular bombing of the Twin Towers in America by an organisation associated with Osama Bin Laden attracted a lot of sympathy from countries outside America. Zimbabwe also captured this event in its memory by assigning the following names for its children who were born around that time. We have names such as: *Osama*, *Taliban* and *Bin Laden* which captured the event of the bombing, and we also have names such as: *Obama*, *Michelle*, *Barrack* and others to reference the election of Barrack Obama to the American presidency.

Furthermore, names like *Gutsaruzhinji* ('socialism') has been explained by Andrew Astrow as follows: During the war, the struggle for socialism and fight against imperialism came to be increasingly emphasised by the petit bourgeois leadership. Such rhetoric about fundamental transformations and socialism were essential for retaining credibility among the radicalised African population. This means that names are carriers of powerful ideological and philosophical assumptions (Sengani, 2015:2). The name becomes a motivational friend to its bearer. For that reason, Mushati (2013:85) is of the view that "Language is an ideological weapon which can be used for the conceptualisation and expression of nationalist narrative".

Barnes & Pfukwa (2010:213) explain with an example:

When a guerrilla adopted the name *Pupurai Mabhunu* ('shred the Boers'), it is not only concealing his identity, but it also made the intentions of the guerrilla very clear: to clear the enemy to pieces like shredding leaves off a branch. Other names were *Urayai Mabhunu* ('kill the Boers'), *Paradzai Mabhunu* ('destroy the Boers'), reflect aggression towards the enemy. They were also Afro-English names like *Advance*, *Eveready*, *Cutmore*, *Crashmore*, *Killmore*, *Nevercry*, *Gamatox* ('killmore'). *Gamatox* was a pesticide that was used in Zimbabwe in the 1960s and 1970s to control pest in crops such as maize and other grains. The '-more' suffix is a common feature of many African names. Such names indicate a readiness to engage the enemy. Many of these names were imperative verbs.

These names are self-explanatory to their mission. In themselves, there is a proper ideological outlook tasked to decolonising the colonised. These names are reflective of a militant spirit among their bearers. These names demanded action from the bearers. Their meanings were motivational. They appear actively calling for action. They invoke strength and delete the aspect of fear from the carriers, since they were scientifically composed of a forward fighting attitude. It was a moral support on its own, an ideology aimed at advancement. This kind of naming also serves the purpose of weakening the enemy. Thus, names can be a means to subvert the powers that be. Hence the view that, the name is power. It empowers the bearer.

The above names point to the fact that Shona people, like other “African people of all persuasions can identify and recount past events by naming children in accordance with the event or circumstance at the time of birth” (Dhlamini *et al.*, 2013:1726). This means that every event happening, and worthy remembering is recorded in children’s names.

5.6. Names with aesthetic character

Some Shona names seem to be aesthetically conceived. These names are chosen on the basis of their aesthetic character than their internal meaning. In other words, the namer may have chosen this name on the consideration of how it rhymes, sounds and generally how the name is formed, more than what the name means. This does not mean that the meaning of the word was not intended when the namer chose it, but it means that the internal meaning was of secondary consideration. Implied in this, is that there are two kinds of meanings in each name or word, namely, the internal meaning and external meaning. The internal meaning refers to the semantics of the word. This is the dictionary mean of the word or the which is intended by the name giver. For example, *Farai* is a Shona for ‘be happy’ and conveys this meaning as its internal or dictionary meaning. But the name *Makanaka* (also a Shona name) while as internal meaning of ‘being beautiful’, it is primarily used by the name giver for its aesthetic or external meaning. It rhymes and sounds nice to the human ear. Such a name is given to females and is often used with the intention to market the bearer of the name to her male counterparts. In this manner, if the male suitor is not provoked by the internal meaning of the name (being beautiful), then the external meaning of

this name (*Makanaka*-with its rhyming character) which is the aesthetic meaning, will finish off the suitor. Okere (1995) corroborates further:

A proportion of the names given to girls is usually metaphorical, in praise and appreciation of their beauty. Parents would want the world to know that their baby girl is the paragon of beauty and, accordingly, may name her after one of the best known symbols of beauty in nature and art.

Examples of names in this category maybe the following: *Akanaka* (meaning 'so pretty'), *Tanaka* ('we are fine'), *Wakanaka* ('you are beautiful'), *Anodiwa* ('is loved'), *Anerudo* ('has love'), *Anesu* ('with us'), *Anenyasha* ('she has mercy'), *Akatendeka* ('she is faithful) and many others. The above names are used for girls, but the following are most suitable for boys: *Munashe* ('you are with God'), *Tinashe* ('we are with God'), *Anashe* ('he is with God'), *Panashe* ('there is God') and others.

Aesthetic names are like makeup. They have the potential of adding beauty to female human beings. They indeed like cosmetics that are applied on the face of a naturally beautiful person. So, giving a baby girl an aesthetic name is like enhancing her beauty. Names such as *Charity*, *Mercy*, *Ruvarashe* (meaning 'God's flower'), *Loviness*, *Beauty*, *Precious*, *Rudo* ('love'), *Chipo* ('gift') and so forth, are all included in this category. Furthermore, names of flowers may also form an important part of this category. For example, *Ivy*, *Rose*, *Violet*, *Daisy* and so on (Dickens (1985: 14&90).

Aesthetic names are chosen because they appear or sound beautiful. According to Mateos (2014:86):

Aesthetic preferences refer to the overall "beautiness" of a forename as a label for a person beyond its meaning or socio-cultural connotations within a group. A forename we aesthetically like is appealing in the way it sounds (phonetic preferences), the way it looks in written form or when it is read by others and the feelings those signs evoke.

Aesthetic personal names are assigned to children at the discretion of the name giver, who at the time of giving the name may have been attracted by the aesthetic character of the name. These names often have a pleasant and melodious sound and are more common girls than in boys, they still be found in boys.

One of the disadvantages of aesthetic names is their tendency to overshadow their literal meaning. Thus, they can dupe us with their rhyming and pleasant sound (Alford,

1988:130). The overlooking of the meaning of aesthetic names can easily led to the habit of treating female human beings as ornaments that are valued only for their beauty and nothing more. Hence the interpretation by Mateos (2014:86) that “girl names have traditionally carried a much more “ornamental” role and their selection has always primed their aesthetic properties, along the traditional factors associated with a subordinated gender role in most societies”.

5.7. Naming to perpetuate family legacy

For African people, every family must find ways and means to preserve and continue its legacy. Among the Shona people, name-saking is very common and important. It is regarded as a convenient way of safeguarding family legacy. Name-saking is a process of naming someone after somebody. In other words, name-saking is whereby name givers name a new-born child after a person of interest. That means using a family member’s name, for example, grandfather or grandmother’s name, and giving it to a new-born child. The term ‘name-saking’ is merger of two words, namely, name and sake. Name-saking presupposes the existence of two people who are sharing the name. The two people are connected together by a common name. Their relationship is effected by the name which they now share in common. The person whose name is used is often honoured and admired by the name giver for having been a great person or having done great deeds (Mateos, 2014:85). On some occasions, the name giver may also be the name owner, for instance, a father may name his newly born son after himself. By so doing, the father may be wanting to incarnate himself in his son. Alford (1988:43) attested to the same when he remarks that “naming after grandparents or deceased ancestors is aimed to provide mnemonic immortality”. But also, the father maybe wanting to preserve his name and perpetuate it as it is associated with some prestige. In most cases, it is done to perpetuate the legacy of the name owner, because as an inheritor of the name, the newly named assumes the status of the name owner. Alford (1988:17) elaborates:

Significance of name sharing may happen if children are named after ancestors or living relative: name sharing indicates reincarnation; name sharing indicates spirit guardianship; name sharing is intended to promote recall of ancestor; namesake share special relationship; namesake are kin equivalents – same person; namesake share attributes, and namesake have special obligations to each other.

Among the Shona people, it is believed that the original name owner, whether alive or dead would be more influential to the person who receives his/her name. The two can become bonded by the name. Thus, children are named after close relatives to promote family continuity (Alford, 1988:54). The affinity name-sexes can be so strong that it enables a mutual understanding between the two to an extent that the person named maybe able to even crack jokes with the name owner despite age difference. The two are intimately connected hence are able to exchange gifts and visit each other at will.

Namesakes are used to revive older names that used to be important in past generations. The name may have been forgotten by mistake, when it is remembered, it must be used to rekindle that ancestral kindle which was about to go off. Makoni *et al* (2007:461) relates a story of a certain “Joseph (born 1964) [who] claims he was named after his maternal uncle and explains this as follows: my father’s brother (uncle) named me. It is a family trend to pass one’s name to a nephew. I too have already passed this name to my nephew”. This indicates that in some traditions, names can form a chain that leads back across history to forgotten times and people who may have played an important role then (Sengani, 2015:3). Monnig (in Sengani, *ibid*) noted a similar practice amongst the Pedi, where children are named after the paternal and maternal relatives to bring the fore-parents or ancestors closer to those who live here and now. The naming practice in this situation can serve to connect family members intergenerationally, symbolising the close bond between the youngest generation and the oldest generation. Among the Shona people, names such as *Karikoga* (meaning ‘the lone one’), *Chivimbiso* (‘promise’), *Dzikamai* (‘settle down’), *Maidei* (‘what do you want’) and many others are used intergenerationally to connect all the generations from which these names originated.

Namesakes sometimes is intended to preserve the social class of the name giver or name owner. Among the Shona people, those who enjoy high social class prefers to name their sons after them. For example, *Robert Mugabe Junior*, the son of the late president of Zimbabwe, *Robert Mugabe* may have been named as such, so that the legacy of his father ‘Robert’ is perpetuated. According to Taylor, “this trend is [rife] among the professionals like doctors, engineers, teachers, lawyers and so on” (cited in Alford, 1988:137). But nowadays, even lower-class fathers are naming their sons

after them. “Among the Senussi nomads of Western Egypt and Eastern Libya, it is a man’s obligation to perpetuate the name of the person (usually his father) who has provided him with his bride price. Thus, sons are usually named after their grandfathers” (Alford, 1988:44).

Since namesaking is mainly practiced for family prestige and continuity, sons who are named after relatives are more in number than daughters. In this naming practice, the names of women, the poor and the powerless are often forgotten in comparison with those of men, the rich and the powerful (Alford, 1988:166). The explanation for this disparity in gender differentiation particularly, can be found in theories of patriarchy and sexism.

Namesaking may be beneficial to the person named. It has been shown by Alford (1988:138) that among those in higher social class have a tendency of leaving sizeable inheritance to their namesake in the family. Let me demonstrate how in namesaking there can be a transfer of inheritance from one namesaker to another. It is often the practice among the Shona people that when a brother who is poor seeks to name his newly born child, he can transfer this privilege of naming to his rich brother, if he so wishes. If his rich brother named the newly born child after himself, the child may be regarded as his symbolically. This then extends to the named child the privilege of receiving the inheritance from the rich brother as if he was his/her father. In this case, the namesaking would have benefitted the child of the poor brother. Namesaking is a very serious naming practice among Africans in general. In many European cultures, namesaking is purely coincidental and raises no expectations between the families of the people who share the same name.

5.8. Naming from a religious perspective

Shona people are deeply religious and spiritual people. Some Shona names reflect the reality of God and ancestors in the lives of people. Accordingly, Shona people express their faith through the names they give to their children. Many people are affiliated in one church or another. The names produced refer to the experience of the power of God and ancestors. According to Beach, “the Shona people believed in God, well before the advent of colonialism and the associated [E]vangelism” (in Makondo *et al.*, 2017:7). One of the examples that shows how names can be used to reflect one’s faith

is the story told by the famous Malawian pastor, Prophet *Shepherd Bushiri* who points out that his name 'Shepherd' was given to him by his mother who was acknowledging that the God is her shepherd after a long struggle she experience before delivering the child (EyeWitness News, 2019/02/04). It is also shown by Makoni *et al* (2007:460) in their interview with one of the respondents by the name of 'Miriam'. She claimed "that she was given that name from the bible because her mother admired the biblical 'Miriam' who was the sister of 'Moses' in the bible. (Makoni *et al.*, 2007:460). These names attest to the fact that the name givers are people who had a strong belief in the power of God. Mbiti (1969:1) elaborates:

Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or no possible ways to isolate it ... To ignore these traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices, can only lead to a lack of understanding of African behaviour and problems. Religion is the strongest element in traditional background and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned.

Naming children after religious experiences of the name giver is itself an expression of the name giver's spirituality (Makondo *et al.*, 2017:2).

Many Shona people accepted the Christian faith with zeal and enthusiasm. Christianity was integrated in the people's lives. Shona people generated names from their experience of the Christian faith. The names were influenced by the Christian faith. These names were not only derived from biblical names such as Sarah, Abraham, Jeremiah, Matthew, Mary, John, Magdalene, Immanuel and others, but were also coined from the spiritual experience of the people in their faith life. For example, *Faith*, *Goodness*, *Kudakwashe* (meaning 'the Lord's will'), *Kudzaishe* ('respect God'), *Kuzivakwashe* ('God knows'), *Roparashe* ('blood of God'), *Mwanawashe* ('God's child') and many others. These names reflected people's experience of God and the church. They expressed the people's love and trust for the church and God. Through these names, the Shona people praised not only God but also the power of faith. Hence, the name *Rutendo* which means 'faith', and was used mostly for girls. Makoni *et al* (2007:439) found that "Pentecostal churches gave their children pragmatic and creative names such as *Tineruvimbo* (meaning 'we have hope'), *Mutsawashe* ('God's grace') and *Petiri* ('God got us where we are')". Names such as *Grace*, commonly used

for girls, and *Hope*, which is used for both, boys and girls. are very popular among Shona people.

Religious faith is a very challenging thing. It manifested itself more when people were faced with life problems. In such a situation, people question the role of God. Mutema & Njanji (2013:254) explain further:

There is a strong belief that there is God who is responsible for all humankind. Because of this belief, the Shonas, consider praising God with names such as *Ishevanogona* meaning 'God is able'. This could be referring to the coming of a special baby or when one has been blessed with both sexes. It could also be a result of the fact that the couple would have tried everything in their capacity to have a child but to no avail and when they turn to God, they manage to have one. They will then declare to their families, friends and neighbours that God is able. *Simbarashe* can be interpreted as 'God's power'. It could be in relation to the conception of that child. The naming could have been spurred by the circumstances surrounding the conception or the birth of that particular child. Normally, this would not have been an easy experience but a daunting one where supernatural intervention was the only solution. There are times when people believe that whatever happens in their lives is the will of God. For instance, when a couple is given seven boys or girls in a row, the youngest of them all can be named *Kudakwashe* ('God's will'). This shows that as human beings, we tend to succumb to a higher authority. *Matifadza* ('you have made us happy') seems to be directed to the giver of children (God) telling Him how happy and appreciative the parents are with the gift of a child. Among the human species, it is more joyful to receive, more so when it is the fruit of the womb.

Makondo *et al* (2017:1) noted that these names above are attributed to "Shona spirituality and beliefs". It is noted that not all Shona people subscribed to the Christian faith. Quite a good number of people, still remain within traditional African spirituality. The also had to assign religious and or spiritual names to their children. Some of the names they gave their children resembled those of Christian. Examples of names in traditional African spirituality include the following: *Dziva* (meaning 'gods of water'), *Maita* ('you have done'), *Manatsa* (you have made it perfect), *Matinyaradza* ('you have comforted us'), *Matirangarira* ('you have remembered us'), *Samhuri* ('family head') and many others. These names express statement in appreciation of what the ancestors or some spiritual forces have accomplished on behalf of the Shona people. Through these names, one learns about the power that ancestors and spirits have over human being. In these names, the parents send the message to ancestors, thanking them for a job well done. In addition, they send a strong message to the community that their belief in ancestors has paid off and no earthly person is more powerful than the

ancestors. In this instance, the parents are proud that ancestors have silenced their enemies and brought comfort to their lives. The gratitude they express to the ancestors is an appeal for an extended welfare on them and their children. Thus, the names in this category are used to keep ancestors and positive spiritual forces very close to the family.

5.9. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the philosophical discourse of Shona personal names. It explored the historicity of Shona names and showed how names were coined and the purpose for which they were intended. The chapter showed that names embody individual and family social experiences. It showed briefly how personal names can express wishes, expectations, emotions, historical events and religious sentiments of the people who give these names. This chapter has underlined the reality that Shona names are not merely coined for their own sake but are coined for a specific purpose.

Chapter 6

Functionality and effectiveness of Shona personal names

6.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses a multiplicity of functions carried out by Shona personal names. It shows the creativity involved in the construction of personal names among the Shona people. Thus, the chapter is intended to show the functions and effects of names on the persons named, or their family, or the community at large. The chapter will further demonstrate how names could arrest and imprison their carriers in the sense that names influence the behaviours of their carriers positively or negatively.

6.2. Functions of Shona personal names

Shona names serve a larger social purpose. They are strategic and are informed with meanings intended for public consumption, as I will show. Thus, names are not given randomly but are given with specific intended objectives. Every name has a positive or negative impact to the person named or his/her family and or the society in which he/she lives. The names are linguistic signs open to further interpretations and representing the actual world of Shona people. They are regarded as genuine facts expressing social views and their world order. The utilitarian outlook of Shona personal names may be represented as follows:

6.2.1. Naming for identification

Individual uniqueness and particularity make identification as the first reason for naming. The need to identify and individualise persons is found in all traditions. Alfred (1988:54) writes that “traditionally, naming theorists suggests that the primary function of personal names is to distinguish people”. Since identification is compulsory and universal, it is the most popular and celebrated function of Shona personal names. Identification differentiates people by creating room for and promote individual uniqueness. As a unique person, the newly named becomes a singular being and a separate entity which is independent and dissimilar to other human entities. Suzman concurs, stating that “personal naming is viewed as significant process of bestowing a name upon a child as a symbol of identity” (in Ngubane & Thabethe, 2013:2).

Brennen defines identity as “a relatively stable self-picture, which consists of the opinions, attitudes, habits and beliefs that last relatively unchanged over long periods of time” (cited in Ngidi, 2012:89). It is shown by Ngidi (2012:91) that “identity is a reciprocal process that operates at two levels: (1) how the individual or group projects or perceives itself; and (2) how the reader or recipient perceives the projected identity” Dickens (1985:19) also observes the same when notes that “from time immemorial, names have embodied the functions of identification, reference and distinguishing. Added to these is their vocative functional”. This gives the impression that reference is the most common and perhaps the most significant function of personal names.

6.2.2. Names as a means of socialisation

Among the Shona people naming does more than distinguishing people. Personal names also index sociological structure (Ngidi (2012:95-6). They function to insert the newly born into a social milieu beginning with the family in its extended structure, the clan and the entire bigger society. Alford (1988:30) elaborates further:

Often the naming of a child is given significant social meaning. Personal names perform a variety of social and psychological functions. These are: to distinguish people; to emphasize family membership and continuity; to signal parenthood or social belonging; to express conceptions of personal identity; to reflect ethno-psychological conceptions of the self, sometimes to link an individual to a place or caste; to reflect a cultural dualism in societies in transition and to distinguish between sexes.

According to Ngidi (2012: 85) there are four elements in a naming system, viz. a name, a name-bearer, a name-giver and the context within which the names are used. For Ngidi (2012:94), names, name-bearers and the community become closely linked in naming ceremonies. For example, in the name *Maidei?* (meaning ‘what do you want?’), which is a name given to a girl by the mother within a polygamous family, the mother addresses this question to the other wives married to her husband. She asks what do these other women want with her in marrying her husband when there are other unmarried men out there. So, the name *Maidej* sets a dialogue in motion between those who are involved in this polygamous marriage. This means that naming systems can be used to manage interpersonal relations. Furthermore, the use of personal names can also reduce social distance between two people of different

ranks, like the Doctor and the patient. For instance, among the Bimanese, an Indonesian group, given names can be used in three different forms. Each given name has a proper form, a common form and a respect form (just as many American given names have proper and common forms). Bimanese proper and common forms are used when one is senior in age (Alford, 1988:8). The use of personal names highlights among others the fact that one is addressing an individual, not just a role occupant or category member. The use of personal names, then, may reflect a recognition of the person's individual even idiosyncratic characteristics (Alford, 1988:98). As shown by Ngidi (2012: 90) the bestowal of a name is a symbolic contract between the society and the individual. From one side of the contract, by bestowing the name, the society confirms the individual's existence as well as acknowledging its responsibilities towards the name-bearer (Ngidi, 2012:90). Thus, sociologically, names are helpful in human interactions because they influence social behaviours and help to address one another.

6.2.3. Personhood and destiny

In a sense names are used to create personhood and destiny among Shona people. Even though this belief is not automatic and guaranteed, this function far overtakes using names for identification purpose. That is why great importance is attached to names, because the meaning is a kind of an investment to the bearer. This is because of the belief that given names are strongly instrumental in determining personality, and thus shaping an individual destiny. History shows ample examples. Issah *et al* (2015:74) observes that "the Swahili of East Africa gave so much value to individual's name in a way that they believe that a name is an essential part of a person's spiritual being. There is a *Swahili's* proverb that says 'wewe na jina lako' (you and your name, you are what your name has made you)". It therefore appears that assigning a name is attaching a character or personality to the named. Even though, some might argue that the principal function of proper names is denotation, it has been shown by Moji (2015: 6) that what is connoted in Shona names far outweighs the denotative character of names. Okolo cemented this argument, stating that "African names are not just mere labels of distinction to differentiate, for instance, 'James' from 'John'. In many African Bantu-speaking societies, as shown by Tempels, "the name expresses the individual character of being. The name is not a simple external courtesy, it is the very

reality of the individual” (in Coetzee & Roux, 2003:214). Agyekum (2006:208) asserted that “his/her name benefits his/her body. This depicts that there is an inherent element in the name that correspond with the bearer’s mental and social behaviour”. It is that connection between the soul and the name that affects the individual’s personality. The effectiveness of the connection can direct or redirect the person’s destiny.

Shona people believe that expected destiny of the named person determines the choice of name to be given. Issah *et al* (2015:81) agree, citing “the Ewe of Togo [that] certain names are given to reflect the belief in destiny, hence *Senanu* (it is the destiny that gives)”. This prompted Ngidi (2012:176) to claim that people “bestow names with the hope that their children will follow those names”. Many Shona people believe that since a person and a name are inseparable, a personal name is like a personal belonging, that is, an invisible mobile personal property owned by bearers. They describe a person in terms of the outlook of his/her name. Finch puts it that “forenames on their own also highlight the ‘individuality and connectedness’ dimensions of a name, signalling the dual dimensions of personhood” (in Mateos, 2014:83).

The Shona people are much convinced that it is your name that determines your attitude and possibly the path to follow in life. For example, Mutema & Njanji, (2013:253) “reveal that some people’s character traits are captured in the names they carry. A name like ‘*Totonga*’ (we rule) may instil domineering attitudes in the carrier”. The name signifies by the description, harshly demands the bearer to imitate its needs, and claims that it has been assigned to do so. For the bearer assuming the intended personality, it is an endorsement of the wishes of the name giver. It is an embracement of the preferred destiny and the practice that gives it birth. The meaning of a name holds the bearer to ransom, so to say. It puts the named individual on an aspiring mode to act accordingly because the name is a powerful observer of self. Hence the assumption that Shona names are not just representational but also constructional. For example,

Child named *Mqabuko*, after the late *Joshua Mqabuko Nyongolo Nkomo*, a renowned leader or father of mass nationalism in Zimbabwe, as a way of acknowledging the role that Nkomo played in liberating Zimbabwe. It is expected that the name *Mqabuko* will trigger powerful passions and emotions among the people of Matebeleland and Zimbabwe in general because he remains a towering figure in the nostalgic memories of most Zimbabweans and as such, the name bearer is expected to resemble the larger than life character of the former (Dhlamini *et al.*, 2013:1729).

This is precisely the point by Agyekum (2006:213) that names “operate within the framework of purposive function of socially constituted behaviour”. As expected, and wished for, names exert enormous pressure to the bearer to live up to expectations. The bearer is engulfed by the meaning and enforced to realise its intentions. Similar findings have been noted among the Yoruba who believe that assigned names have profound and powerful effects in the life of the named, and that the name that a child bears can influence his/her entire course of life from sundry behaviour, integrity, professions, success and so on (Issah *et al.*, 2015:75). That means names carry a person’s destiny. Mandela (1995:3) also attested to this:

...the only thing my father bestowed upon me at birth was a name, *Rolihlahla*. In Xhosa, *Rolihlahla* literally means ‘pulling the branch of a tree’, but its colloquial meaning more accurately would be ‘troublemaker’. I do not believe that names are destiny or that my father somehow divined my future, but in later years, friends and relatives would ascribe to my birth name the many storms I have both caused and weathered.

Examining the life of Mandela, it is easy to believe that names are carriers of destiny. Gora & Manyarara (2015:35) expound “that for an African, a name does not only represent a person’s identity, but a name is also regarded as a promise, a vocation and a list of expectations”. It is therefore undoubtedly indisputable that some categories of African names are expected to be predictive of the future. These names function like a call for destiny which the named must rise to it. The destiny starts at the naming ceremony. In itself the name is a symbol of hope – a hope that is realised in time. The following example shows how names live up to their promises:

uDingane, may be interpreted in two ways, as the verb ‘*dinga*’ which means ‘to be in exile’ and ‘to need something’. As events illustrated, *Dingane* eventually wanted the Zulu throne and plotted to kill King *Shaka*. After *Shaka*’s assassination, *Dingane* succeeded him but he himself ended up having to give up the throne, and was hunted down to be assassinated, eventually dying in exile (Ntuli cited in Ngubane & Thabethe (2013:3).

Dingane’s name seems to have been prophetic as his destiny was foretold in his name. In a sense one could venture to say that naming is an invitation to the name-bearer to participation in the unfolding drama of his or her name. It is for this reason why Shona people strive to give names with positive meaning to their children. For instance, a name like ‘Champ’ can enforce the bearer to become a champion in every aspects of

life he/she enters because his name always demands him to be a winner. This also means that a name can be an intrinsic motivation for the bearer to strive to be what the name says the bearer is.

The idea of a name as a definer of one's destiny can be comparable to the Igbo's notion of *chi* – a personal god residing in each person and determining their destiny. Okere (1995) elaborates further:

Another significant area covered by Igbo names is religion as represented by the God or *Chi* concept. The name of God in Igbo is *Chi*. [But] *Chi* is also the name of the personal god or double of God within the individual (*chi m*, my own or personal God as it is often referred to), guiding him through life as he works out his destiny. C K Meek writes [that] one of the most striking doctrines of the Igbo is that every human being has, associated with his personality, a genius or spiritual double known as his *chi*. This conception of a transcendent self is not confined to the Igbo.... A man's abilities, faults, and good and bad fortunes are ascribed to his *chi* (cited in Okere, 1995).

Submitting to the conception of 'name as a definer of destiny', leads us to a conclusion that human behaviour can be influenced by the meaning embedded in his/her name.

6.2.4. Names as shields

Names can also be used as protective measures for the name-bearer. Using names as shield to protect the children ensures that the child is safe under the given name. In this case the name acts like an insurance that assures a life cover to the bearer. Using a name as a shield is done for a variety of reasons. For example, these names may be indirect reactions to problematic situations in the lives of the name-bearers, their parents or their communities at large (Ngidi, 2012:129). In an environment wherein spiritual evildoing is rampant, there could be a use of derogatory names to confuse and defeat the perceived enemies. Names like *Hatineinazvo* (meaning 'we do not care about this'), may give a false impression to the evil spirit that intends to hurt the child that the parents do not care about this child. The same can be said about names such as *Ndochii* ('what is this'), *Paradzai* ('destroy'), *Toraizvenyu* (you can take if you want'), just to mention a few, which may falsely suggest that parents are neglectful of the child and actually despise them, are helpful tactics intended to mislead evil powers. These names appear to be ignoring and neglecting the newly born child, yet in reality they are shielding by misleading the enemies of the child.

Ngidi (2012:129) found that, “the use of this type of indirectness maybe a defensive mechanism, a rapport strategy, or a form of creativity to disclaim any negative intent” by the evil spirit. Similarly, there is the tradition of protecting infants from death by giving them an ‘ugly’ name such as ‘Bastard,’ or *Zondai* (hate me), in order to ward off evil spirits from the child (Moji, 2015:5).

Misleading names can also be found in conflict situations. In Zimbabwe, “guerrilla war names served the functions not only of concealing identities but also of creating new identities. For example, names like *Muchatiroto Mabhunu* (you shall be thoroughly cooked you Boers), *Mabhunu Muchapera* (Boers you shall be wiped out), *Pasi nemaSellout*, (down with traitors), *Gwazai Mabhunu* (mow down the Boers), *Hamutikurire Mabhunu* (you will not defeat us you Boers), and so on, were deliberately derogatory statement of defiance and a challenge to the enemy (Barnes & Pfukwa, 2010:213). This indirectness of naming among the guerrillas was a reaction responding to problematic situations in the lives of people. The names are helpful tools in concealing identity, but at the same time motivating the bearers. Dureen & Green (2016:64) give further examples:

A name such as Gladman would suggest that the family was gladdened by the birth of that particular child...the individual so named was an illegitimate mixed-race child. The mother was a maid who came back home pregnant. She gave birth to a coloured child who the grandfather accepted unconditionally in the face of his scandalised neighbours insisting, he was a ‘Gladman’.

The name is helpful in making the family and the community hide the disappointment they felt about the behaviour of the mother of the child. Giving a name opposed to the feelings is a way of hiding the real feelings. Such a name was intended to shield the family of the child from ridicule by neighbours. The deception is to make the situation look normal to avoid and avert humiliation in society because situations like these are culturally frowned at. So, a name is used as a hideout place.

There are names that reflect pleading for protection in a Godly manner. Names like *Ruvarashe* (meaning ‘God’s flower’), *Mwanawashe* (‘the child of God’) are very common in this category. In the name *Ruvarashe*, the mother wanted God to save her daughter from witches who were waiting on the side to take her away. The logic is that God is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, therefore renders evil forces powerless. Since the child is God’s flower, the name is a direct call for protection from

him. This name expresses a need to succumb to a higher authority for maximum protection. Agyekum (2006:221) noted similar observation:

The Akans, like other cultures in West Africa, believe that if a mother suffers constant child mortality, then the reason is that it is the child's mother in the underworld that does not want the child to stay in the living world. To combat such an unfortunate situation the parents, give the child a weird name. They believe that if the name is unattractive the other mother in the underworld will not like to accept the child over there and this would make the child stay. For example, *Sumina* (garbage), *Donko* (slave), *Kaya* (carrier of loads), *Agyegyesem* (harassment/troublemaking) and so on.

This phenomenon of misleading names can also be shown in assigning a male infant with a girl's name or vice versa. In other words, it depends on the nature of the threat. Monnig explains the concept of spirit deception among the Pedi as follows:

Families who have had misfortune with previous children will treat a new child in a peculiar manner. Parents who have lost a few children will name a new-born daughter – son – while son will be called *Ngwananyana* – small daughter. They will also be clothed and treated as if they belong to the opposite sex. Mothers who have had a number of still-born children will give a child an unpleasant name. These children are treated as if they are unwanted. Their hair is dressed differently from other children, and they are mostly avoided. This is done to confuse the ancestral spirits into thinking that the parents do not care for them, and that taking them away will not further punish the parents...In fact, giving ugly names is quite the opposite (Koopman, 2002:40).

Names like *Shorai* (meaning 'criticise') and *Torai* ('take away') also serve the same purpose. Such names are aimed at confusing the evildoers to leave the child alone. Although the names sound negative, but the intention is very positive. The intention is to protect the loved child, thereby by ignoring the cosmetic names that might invite jealous powers. Ngidi (2012:163) describes this as "survival names".

Protective names might be used when women keep on witnessing the death of their infants. To save the new child, the mother might choose to name her child a derogatory name. Alford (1988:64) refers to this tactic as "ugly masks, eliciting pity or at least avoiding envious attention". In this way, a name becomes a very good conman. These names serve the purpose of outmanoeuvring and outclassing the enemy to stay in darkness and comfortably regard itself as the winner not knowing that it is the big loser this time. The reason why these names are common in traditional African societies is because there is a general belief that infant mortality is caused by spiritual factors, not

medical factors (Issah *et al.*, 2015:84). Mocking names are only to deceive, thereby uninvite the malevolent spirits. Berglund argues that “it can well be his Achilles heel in the event of an enemy desiring his death” (cited in Dickens, 1985:17).

6.2.5. Names as oral history

It is common knowledge that behind every Shona personal name there is a story to tell. All given names are important registers of history of the named or the family, and sometimes the country. Names are perceived as warehouse of knowledge. Ngidi (2012:94) termed this as “cognitive power.” She claimed that people use their cognitive powers to remember what a person might have done in the past and still refer to that incident in the naming of their children. They rely solely on their memory to name children about incidents which happened before they were born. There is remembrance in names, and remembrance does not have expiry date. Lombard contends that “Niitsitapi’s (black foot Indian) culture, personal names appear to form an integral part of Niitsitapi oral tradition and also seen to play a powerful role in establishing and maintaining Niitsitapi conceptualisations of individuals, as well as social and cultural identity” (cited in Ngidi, 2012:18). Okere (1995) maintains that “in oral societies, naming was not only a privilege but also a way of perpetuating and hence an effective way of conferring immortality to thoughts that would otherwise not outlive the breath by which they were uttered”. It is for these reasons that when a name is created, a discourse on history is which reflects what is observed or experienced is constructed (Sengani, 2015:2). Shona people use oral history to immortalise memories. Social, economic and political developments are neither constant nor consistent. Their inconsistencies are on constant change. These are captured by names given to the little ones. Since names reflect the ongoing changes in history, they could be seen as labels of history. The naming process in independent Zimbabwe had to reflect the new power relation that prevailed in the nation (Magudu *et al.*, 2014:74). For example, a child named *Batanai* (unity), signals a specific phase in the country’s history wherein unity was crucial. The naming is reminiscent to a particular episode that must not be forgotten. The mentioning of the name makes the struggle come alive, therefore remembered again. Okere (1995) attest to this:

The technique also provides lifesaving security for historical events

for whom these names serve as lasting memories. As the name of the person is called and invoked daily, the event it commemorates is daily recalled and relived for family, while the bearer feels himself inserted and his roots re-inforced in the immemorial history of which he is now a part.

For example, as shown by Dhlamini *et al* (2013:1726), the Ndebele people registered and documented their grievances through the naming of children born during the political struggle era. Some of these personal names are part of an attempt to restore and maintain a tradition that celebrated the oral narratives of the Shona people. “Politically minded parents who spoke ChiShona gave their children names such as *Rusununguko* (‘freedom’) or *Nkululeko* (‘freedom’) in Ndebele and *Tongai* (rule) in Shona” (Makoni *et al.*, 2007:439). These names are clearly related to the coming of independence in Zimbabwe in 1980. Every piece of history, one could say leaves behind personal names to be remembered with. For instance, Makoni *et al* (2007:439) relate of the sad events in the Matebeland region, which short-lived the celebration of colonial freedom as the North Korean trained Fifth Brigade, popularly known as the *Gukurahundi* (the storm that thunders) descended into the region and killed innocent civilians.

The effects of this onslaught were also reflected in names of children born during that period. Names such as *Phephelaphi* (where shall we go), *Senzeni* (what have we done) and *Siphamandla* (God give us strength to endure this torture) were prevalent. The names are a meta-commentary on the repressive military regime that operated in the Matebeland region. The end of this war was also documented in names. The parents who could be considered to be educated, such as teachers, tend to display less creativity with names such as ‘Unity’, for a child born soon after the 1987 unity accord between Zimbabwe’s former liberation groups: ZANU and ZAPU. The names ‘Vote’ and ‘Referendum’ also seem to be based on historical happenings.

In oral tradition, history was kept alive through names. This was done through naming children after topical events or characters. A person bearing the name *Soames* for example, was born just before independence when Lord Soames was tasked to preside over the demise of Rhodesia (Dureen & Green, 2016:63-4). Mateos (2014:96) puts it thus, that “such top choices aggregated for all children born in a given year comprise the top hits list of the most popular forenames preferred in that year”.

According to Chabata (2012:46), Shona names “provide clues to our understanding of the name-giver’s history, their values and aspirations for the future, or simply their worldview”.

The naming of children after historical events is an important development aimed at keeping the past present. The practice is a landmark victory as far as information is kept alive in the people’s mouth. The naming is the recording of crucial information by the name-giver because he/she does not afford to lose that information as it is essential for posterity sake. For example,

The professionals; lawyers, teachers, nurses, lecturers and others, tend to use names as reflectors of current political thoughts and attitudes. This could be due to mentally stimulating environment in which they work. The unskilled workers tend to use names as reflectors of present-day occurrences and phenomena...This could be possibly due to the fact that their work environment does not provide much of an opportunity to exchange ideas on the current political thinking (Dickens, 1985:158).

In Shona, a name like *Nzara* (meaning ‘drought’) can be a reference to the drought that took place in the country in 1992. Also, a name like *Nhamo* (‘suffering’) suggest a period of hardship that a family went through. Thus, memorable historical events are captured by personal names of children.

6.2.6. Complaining and or boasting through names

Shona names can be used to complain, to show (dis)satisfaction with something and to boast. In other instances, the child’s arrival is used as occasion to boast and make statements of triumph over misfortunes or of indignation over gossiping neighbour (Okere, 1995). According to Ngidi (2012:7) some names are used to “criticises, admonish, praise or explain a course of action by a member or family members and are used as strategic alternatives to confrontational discourse”. *Mandishorei* (meaning ‘why do you undermine me’), for example, was given to a girl whose mother was tired of her husband who went for marrying another wife. So, she questions the motive behind this which she perceived as belittlement because she believes that she is capable of doing everything expected from a woman. Mutema & Njanji (2013:253), elaborate further:

It has emerged that in polygamous families, naming of children is not just about complaining or voicing discontent. Those who apparently 'sitting pretty' or at an advantage, also communicate the situation they are in through naming. Names like *Totonga* ('we are in charge or we have got the upper hand') are the order of the day in such scenarios to show who is in control of the situation. This is clear communication to the other wife or wives and relatives who may dare to intervene, that there is nothing they can do about the situation. *Tapenya* ('we have shone, or we are on the sport light') is another example of a life well-lived in the polygamous boat and it is a message that is sent to the co-wife/wives and the world at large, loudly and clearly that all is well for this particular wife and child(ren). It is a name that comes, courtesy of one wife's position in the husband's life.

The above names are descriptive of some self-acclaimed favour or fortune in a household in which the name-givers live and are used to seek for attention on the name-giver. The naming is intended to intensify and externalise the conflict within the family of the named individual. These types of names are aimed at frustrating the rivals. "Names such as *Everjoy* and *Rejoice* would be indicative of good fortune or good times hence descriptive of a situation of 'sitting pretty' (Mutema & Njanji (2013:253). For such reasons, names like *Tapfuma* ('we are rich') and *Richman* are common and popular in Zimbabwe. Other names in this category are: *Mariyawanda* (*Mariyawanda* means 'money is too much'), *Rugare* (*Rugare* means 'good living'). The naming is influenced by class struggle for recognition. These Shona names appeared more rampantly during the time when the family's economic situation was booming. However, as has been shown by Issah *et al.* (2015: 85), this is not unique of Shona people. Among the Edo of Nigeria names like *Idemudia* ('I am financially stabilised'), *Abieyuwa* ('born into wealth') are also widespread. Among the Igbo of Nigeria there is usage of names like *Akubueze* ('wealth is the King'), *Nwaobuako* ('child who carries wealth'); The Akan of Ghana also use names such as *Sika* ('wealth'), *Afuyie* ('has appeared well'); The Ngunis of South Africa also name their children *Mcebisi* ('the one who brings wealth'); *Gugulami* (my wealth).

There are names that express complaints from name-givers. For instance, there were names created and popularised during the liberation struggle in Southern Africa. The following are but a few among many: *Zwelinzima* (our world is problematic); *Bhangubkhu* (the struggle is monumental), *Dingamandla* (we need strength); *Mhlabawethu* (this is our land) and many others. These names were signs of protest and resentment by Zulus due to oppressive systems of white people" (Dickens, 1985:101). The names are socio-political complains laid against the perpetrators of

injustice. The people felt being persecuted for nothing and naming was the safest method to voice their frustration. Thus, “names form an important part of a language, as Nicolaisen argues “the acquisition of language, another human trait, has given him (man) the tool which to name, ... language may be described as a social instrument used by members of society to communicate with one another” (Ngidi, 2012:98).

6.2.7. Names and gender classification

While in many European cultures names are generally gender specific, as for an example, John refers to a male person and Mary to a female person, among the Shona people, as a general rule, names are gender-free. However, in some other African societies names have gender designation. These societies use prefixes and suffixes as pointers to the gender of the person (Mateos, 2014:88). Alford (1988) and Dickens (1985) concur that men and women’s names may be distinguished by suffixes or prefixes among some African cultures. For Dickens (1985:42), female Zulu names are indicated by feminine lexemes. Classic examples may be found the names *Sipho* (Gift) and *Siphokazi* (Gift). The former is used for boys and the latter with the suffix *-kazi* for girls. Kooopman (2002: 45) testifies to the same pattern of differentiating between boys and girls among some ethnic groups Africa. He found that from the *Abaluhya* of Uganda, the girl’s name *Nafula* is distinguished from the boy’s name *Wafula*, both meaning ‘born during rainy season’; again, in Somalia, the boy’s name *Roble* can be contradistinguished from the girl’s name *Roblai*, both meaning ‘the one who brings rain’.

Shona name-givers do not concern themselves with gender considerations when selecting a name. Since most names are created from social happenings, they are gender free. The reason is that there is no gender in social situations. There are no male or female circumstances. And thus, names do not reflect gender. But the continued usage of certain names on boy children may give an impression that such names are gender specific. The gender direction is a result of other people adopting similar names for a specific gender. For example, if the first person to receive a particular name was a male, the next family in that particular society is likely to give the same name to their male child, and the same can said of female names. Thus, etymologically no name is designed to fit certain gender. For instance, a child named

'Mistake' or 'Murambiwa' ('the rejected one') by may be a boy or a girl (Gora & Manyarara, 2015:37). There are other nations who are following the same trend as the Shona on the non-specificity of gender. Alford, (1988:3) reports that among the Iroquois, some names are unisex. In Shona, names like *Fungai* (meaning 'think'), *Tinotenda* ('we thank you'), *Tatenda* ('we are thankful'), *Farai* ('be happy') and so on, are unisex.

Having stated that personal names in Shona are not gender specific, one must however point out that there are certain names which describe what is commonly regarded as a feminine quality. Girls would be assigned such names. A name like *Makanaka* (you are beautiful), is not often found among boys in Zimbabwe. This is because women are characterised with beauty or precious products. Mateos (2014:85) had similar understanding that:

Daughter names are selected from a much broader pool of names, or invented altogether, in order to reflect beauty and uniqueness. This forms part of a sort of 'dowry endowment' to better her chances in the 'marriage market'. This tradition reveals the ephemerality of women's names, since in many cultures, she loses her paternal surname at marriage and hence a beautiful forename ensures portability to another family as opposed to loyalty to a patrilineal lineage.

Men are characterised with power and dominance – an issue that may need to be analysed further in order to help deal with gender-based violence in our societies. Gender is therefore a complex issue as far as naming is concerned.

6.2.8. Names for identity representation

According to Alford (1988:118), naming practices are more than mere indexes of symptoms of social perceptions. They are active forces in creating these perceptions. Names in their languages represent identity. Since names use vocabulary, they are ideological weapons in entrapping identity. For Alford (1988:69), "naming systems serve two central functions: differentiation and categorisation. The two work hand in hand, since the need to distinguish individuals exists alongside the need to categorise people, to fit into a social matrix". Personal names are important identity markers of a people. When they are repetitively used, it means that history is recorded in spoken voices and written words. Cultural activities are recognised and protected for identity

representation. Since names are part of language and as shown by Mungwini (2011:13), “language is crucial in the construction of subjectivities and shaping attitudes,” names are therefore important for the construction of subjectivities.

According to Mateos (2014:257), “identity, though complex, can be encoded in a name.” So, naming in African societies has a significant role in identity marking. Realising the significance of identity, many Africans with Western names, especially in United States of America renamed themselves in search of their true identity. The rebirth was a realignment course aimed at assuming a proper position in one’s society. For example, in Zimbabwe, a famous literary scholar changed his name from European to *ChiShona*, by using *Tafadzwa* as his new name. Since Naming practices provide an important window on the construction of ethnic identities, in the above example, the change of name reflects self-identification which is an affirmation of one’s true identity (Makoni *et al.*, 2007:450-1). Moji (2015:16) gave an example of a character called *Tshaka* in America, who claimed he was using “naming rituals to remain inserted in the social matrix of his country of origin”. The greatest African Ghanaian philosopher, Anton Wilhelm Amo (1703 – 1759), despite being moulded in Western culture, his thoughts represent African identity (Hountondji, 1983: Part 2). Identity, which is a complex and controversial subject can be defined as that which connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself and persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others. According to Barnes & Pfukwa, (2010:211) “identity is a reciprocal process that operates at two levels: (1) how the individual or group projects or perceives itself (2) how the reader or recipient perceives the projected identity.”

A name can be erased or remain dormant for a period of time and then be resuscitated at some later stage when conditions demand its revival. For instance, after independence in Zimbabwe, old names that laid dormant resurfaced and became more pronounced than colonial, Western or English names (Moyo, 2012:13). Identity is not only reinforced by the resurfacing of old names. At times it reinforces itself by embracing new names that evoke the long-buried past. For example, at independence, Belgian Congo changed to Zaire, Tanganyika to Tanzania, Gold Coast to Ghana, Nyasaland to Malawi, Bechuanaland to Botswana (Mushati, 2013:71). Naming offers creative platform whereby power relations obtaining in a given milieu are symbolically played out (Mushati, 2013:71). Manning contends that “the colonial

experience and decolonisation brought changing identities for Africans at both individual and collective levels” (cited in Mushati, 2013:71). Makoni *et al.* (2007:448) illustrate this change of identity by citing the following examples:

Dr H *Kamuzu Banda*’s original name was *Kamunkwala*, a *Tumbuka* word which means ‘a small dose of medicine’, but he later changed this himself to *Kamuzu*, which symbolised the dawn of a new era. *Albert Chinualumoga* changed to *Chinua Achebe*, he attributed the usage of Western names as paying tribute to Victorian England, James Ngugi changed to *Ngungi wa Thiong’o*, which means ‘*Ngungi*, the son of *Thiong’o*’. ... Arnold Stofile changed to *Mankenkesi Stofile*, *Patrick ‘Terror’ Lekota* changed to *Mosioua Lekota*. (Moyo, 2012:13,14). After 1994 general election, changes from place name to personal names occurred. *Benny Alexander*, Pan African Congress, Secretary General, changed his name to *Khoisan X*, arguing that it was in line with restoring once lost identity by oppressive colonial system, which viewed everything from black man as inferior and barbaric. Explaining his argument, he said he was not adopting but restoring (Koopman, 2002:3-4). A number of former combatants in Zimbabwe’s war of liberation changed their names after independence. One former combatant who was assigned the name Hitler at birth, changed his name to *Chenjerai* (‘be clever’) in 1980, shortly after independence (Makoni *et al.*, 2007:448).

Pfukwa writes that naming and renaming become an act of claiming an identity. To rename self is a declaration of independence from wider social control and it is a choice in identity (Ngidi, 2012:90). Whether society accepts this self-chosen identity is quite another matter. Clearly, the naming patterns after independence show an Afro-centric disposition which seeks to deconstruct and reconstruct the colonial discourse (Mushati, 2013:72).

Alford (1988:76) claims that notions of identity continuity is so strong that one man spared the life of an enemy because he (the enemy) bore his father’s name. Names as identity markers are very helpful in tracing family membership. Alford (1988:55) attest that given names identify one’s family. They reflect of family structure.

6.3. Effects of Shona personal naming

How far effective is the name? The names given have profound repercussions on what actions the bearer performs. A name is like an official identity document given to a new-born by immediate family members. Firstly, it is the first identity tag that qualifies the named individual to be called a person. Secondly, it qualifies the named individual

to get the identity document from state departments. In so doing, the name promotes recognition of the named individual. Since the name is used for legal and administrative purposes, without a name, identity document cannot be issued. That is why Alford (1988:140) argues that “first names are required by law”. In most modern societies it is a basic human right to have a name, an identity and ultimately, a nationality. The benefits of these qualifications enable one to enjoy citizenship and become a resident in the country. History has shown that “proper names clearly appear on the very first records of literature that exist, [especially] those found in the Middle East in Sumerian Cuneiform language dating to Circa 3000 BC, as a way to record legal and administrative transactions” (Mateos 2014:30-1). Some have described these names as given names while others refer to them as forenames or first names. According to Annakiso, “the fundamental reason of naming in human society is to provide a symbolic base for social interaction through a formal means of individual identification” (in Issah *et al.*, 2015:77). Dickens (1985:22). added that “among the Zulu people, personal names (*amagama asekhaya*) are the only ones recognised by the courts of law and appear on official documents.” The obvious consequence of such social nature of name is ‘that [fore]name may demarcate subgroups of society along such lines as gender, race, class, ethnicity’ (Liebersson & Bell cited in Mateos (2014:91). “The psycho-sociological effects of naming rest on the fact that the word (name) is a significant observable mark identifying an entity in people’s minds” (Gora & Manyarara, 2015: 35). Among the Shona people, names can easily depict how good or bad is the relationship between family members.

According to Issah *et al.* (2015: 75) “the name given to human infant distinguishes him or her socially and incorporates him or her fully into wider society.” Ngidi (2012:123-4) warned that a person’s name is intertwined with his being, dignity and respect. Should you use a person’s name in a bad way, such as saying bad things about him or her, you can be sued for defamation of character. This teaches people the importance of a personal name and the importance of treating it the way you would treat the name bearer with dignity and respect. Zawawi explains that a name constructs a person because the name one bears may create an attitude in those who hear it before they meet the name bearer (Agyekum, 2006:208). This means that the influence of names

is powerful to a point that a person can lose or gain confidence of himself/herself because of the semantic meaning embedded in that given name.

6.3.1. Positive effects of naming

Issah *et al* (2015:85) finds that a personal name represents one of the basic necessities of everyday living. Without it, social interactions would not be possible in many ways. Thus, names remain a significant factor in determining the person's position in society. This is not a mere generalisation, but a reality exonerated by facts. For example, the classificatory role of names proves very useful. By studying names, we can find out how the human race divides up and then sort into groups the many people living in a single society (Smith-Bannister cited in Mateos, 2014:117). Personal names are equipped with ethnic colours which consist of religion, history, geography and customs, something that looks like a qualifying requirement for choosing a name. Alford (1988:167) summed thus, "naming systems both reflect and help to create the conceptions of personal identity that are perpetuated within any society". Jenkins defined this as social identity that helps in "our understanding of who we are and of who other people are" (cited in Mateos, 2014:91). A name not only identifies the individual person, but it also signals its bearer's social identity (Mateos, 2014:91). Machaba explains that, "although names are found in a language, they do not only function as linguistic items. According to Ngidi (2012:98), the fact that naming is not simply a linguistic matter, but a social and psychological matter, is demonstrated by various naming practices adopted by people from cultural and religious backgrounds. Okere (1995) conceded that names "provide a window into the Igbo world of values as well as their conceptual apparatus for dealing with life". To this understanding, it is not arguable that names are helpful methods of communication, transporting important messages between families, communities and even countries. All of the developments that people wish them to be known are spread speedily via personal naming system. of speech, therefore, conclude that the naming system seem democratic. It is very flexible, it allows people to argue, insult, mock, laugh, denounce, gossip, praise and so on.

This method of communication looks harm-free. People can shout and fight through naming, but there will be no physical injuries or damages. It highly avoids criminal

actions due to its zero tolerance to physical exchange of fists. Sometimes the naming can be a systematic means of public insulting, but there is no public assaulting

Since there is a visible relative privilege in good names, good naming can be a convenient escape route from poverty. As previously shown that names define destiny, so we find out that good names mean good destiny. Hence the conclusion that good name buys favours. These studies prove that the given names are very important because they seem to bring good fortune and favours to the bearer. This is enough lessons for parents to excise caution and put some restraints when naming children.

6.3.2. Negative effects of naming

The right to name children is a burning issue among the Shona people. There is always a contestation between the parents and the grandparents, both claiming powers over the child to be named. Sengani (2015:2,8) agrees that “naming creates a conflict between the parents and the grandparents because all are in a position to exercise their authority.” Although this is a problem between the parents and grandparents of the child to be named, it does affect the children negatively. Gora & Manyara (2015:380) stressed that “while naming for the named is largely an uncontrollable life event that could cause stress in individuals who may not be able to protect themselves, such a person may find it difficult to exercise familial loyalty towards their namer(s)”. Ngidi (2012:165) blamed the naming system for not being able to resolve such tensions and conflict.

Further, children whose names are conflict-ridden continue to live in such a conflict environment long after their namers have passed on. Ngidi elaborates further:

Conflicts and contestation in polygynous families resulting in names that in most cases objectify the name-bearer, the name given makes the name-bearer a tool to fight the enemy as in the name *Mdinden* ('beat him up'), a shield for protection as in the name *Sphephelo* ('the refuge') and a loudspeaker to announce foul play as in the name *Hletshiwe* ('the one they gossip about') (2012:136).

Such names may also fail to promote a secure and loyal relationship between the name-bearer (child) and the parent and also with the others around. When names portray a lack of affection or parental discord, the effects on a child may be far-reaching

(Gora & Manyarara, 2015:37). Names outlive the name-givers in most cases. This poses a challenge in a situation where the grievance was addressed, and people reconciled and yet the name still act as a constant reminder of what once was. In such a situation, it is clear that the name was given when the child was born, but as time elapse, the child remains stuck with the name which reflect the conflict the child knows very little about (Ngidi, 2012:135). These situations are common among the Shona people. It is an obstruction of progress, where the present is stuck in the past.

The sure way of assuming poor destiny is getting a bad or negative name. This is because naming works like a biological attribute. Such names become painful scars. Sherrod & Rayback confirm that children with odd names tend to get worse grades and also that such children get a lot of abuse at school (cited in Gora & Manyarara, 2015:38). Some studies seem to indicate that possessing an unusual name can bring hardships in one's life. In a study of 10 000 delinquent males at the Cook County Psychiatric Institute, it was found that bizarrely named males, for example, *Oder*, *Lethal* and so on, committed four times as many criminal acts as commonly named males (Alford, 1988:152). For example, it is shown by Alford (1988: 152-3) that

In a study of 3 320 students who attended Harvard from 1941 to 1944, students with unusual or 'eccentric' first names were compared to the rest of the students. The 4 percent who had eccentric names accounted for 15 percent of the students treated for psychoneurotic problems and 17 percent of all those who flunked out of school. In another study, the case histories of 144 patients with 'peculiar-sounding' names were compared with those of 1 538 commonly named patients. The boys with peculiar names tended to be far more psychologically disturbed than the rest, but girls with unusual names were slightly more disturbed than the norm.

Through certain names, children can be emotionally abused by parents, teachers and other adults as these tend to be in positions of power. For example:

A name may constitute emotional ill-treatment of a child and consequently affect the behaviour and development of such a child (Gora & Manyarara, 2015:37). Meanwhile, rare names might be identified with 'deviant behaviour' in a group, increasing the chances of a child being discriminated (Mateos, 2014:87). This exonerates the argument that negative names can cause mental disability and affect the child's destiny. In other cultures, this pattern of naming can also be seen. For instance, among

the Cuna Indians there is a believe that there is magic in names, and for this reason they frequently bestow animal names, especially on boys, with the hope that these children will develop the strengths of the namesake animal (Alford, 1988:62). Mushati (2013:88) explains that the people named after such animals tend to proudly identify with the qualities that are ascribed to each animal, whether in folklore or in real life. For example, in naming someone *Shumba* ('Lion') the intention is often to emphasise the immense strength and ruthlessness of the King of the Jungle. But even where semantically meaningful names are not intended to produce or encourage certain qualities in the child, it is very likely that what sociologists call 'labelling effects' alter the way the child is perceived and treated (Alford, 1988:62). According to Agyekum (2006:231), "Akan believe that there is some inherent power and linkage in names and expect the names to reflect and indexicalise the lives and behaviour of people either positive or negatively". In this sense the named person may remain trapped in the meaning of a name.

The consequences of negative names can lead to economic sabotage. For example, giving one's child, a minority name may impose important economic costs on the child (Fryer & Levitt cited in Mateos, 2014:110). It may affect the chances of getting a job. Ultimately, it is such situations that give rise to renaming. It is shown by Gora & Manyarara (2015:35) that "some names may be embarrassing for the bearer because they do not share the namer's experience and [so] the person named may feel a need to change such a name". Renaming is therefore the only avenue to change one's destiny.

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that African names have a multiplicity of valuable functions and have significant meaning for both the name-giver and the one named. I have shown that Shona personal names are used in a variety of functions which includes naming for identification; and naming for socialisation; I have also shown that names influence the formation of personhood and are often regarded as determinants of destiny; I have argued that names can be used as shields, oral history; and often express complaints and a sense of boasting from the name-givers. I have shown that since names capture significant moments in the history and lives of people, they can

thus serve as memory-aiders. Although in many African cultures names are gender specific, I have shown that in the Shona culture this is not necessarily the case. At the end, I have also shown that Shona personal names have both positive and negative effects in the lives of the named.

Chapter 7

Critical interpretation of the discussion

7.1. Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to bring solutions to naming problems, because personal names can bring happiness or sadness in the name bearer's life. Thus, the chapter calls for change of what it deemed negative in the naming conception. It takes a position of emphasising positive naming. The chapter further argues that transformation in naming practices is an essential move towards averting challenges that comes from naming mistakes. The chapter concludes by reminding people that civilisation has taken place, new generation has been born, technology has been advanced, a reflection calling for change in everything. The chapter calls for smart naming, which is conflict and derogatory free.

7.2. Naming solutions

Firstly, mistakes are common to everyone everywhere. Some mistakes are intentionally caused, while others are weaknesses of human nature. In naming practices, in most cases, it is the name giver who intentionally design names, but it is the name bearer who bear the brunt of a negative name. In naming practices generally, the name giver may be regarded as the perpetrator while the person given the name may be regarded as the victim. However, the intentions to bring solutions in naming practices benefits both the name giver and the person given the name. Often the objective of the giver is to objectify the given in an attempt to satisfy his/her own ambitions which in the process harms the named person and his or her humanity. Often the named is a victim who suffers from a problem that he/she did not create. However, it is important to note that there is always a rescue opportunity to every problem created. Human made problems have human made solutions. There is always a gateway towards the solution. In a situation wherein one feels trapped in a name, chances of survival are available. There is high possibility to change names. A person is free to rename or make use of a nickname. Makoni *et al* (2007:448) claimed that "there are instances of individuals changing their names and naming themselves at a later stage in their lives." On defining this practice, Alford (1988:157) writes that "a change in name reflects a change in identity. A change helps to create an identity change". He further states that "names can be changed through a court's permission

or even without, as long as there is no fraudulent or criminal intent, for example, escaping creditors” (1988:158). In most cases, “migrants may adopt new names to assimilate into their new environment or as responses to xenophobia and racism directed at, for example, Zimbabweans in South Africa” (Makoni *et al* (2007:463). Alford (1988:158) concurred with this notion suggesting that:

Name changes may assist a person in shedding an old, unwanted identity. This might be a result of migration to meet foreign-sounding surnames like the Jewish who adopted Anglicised names to avoid labelling, detection or assimilation. Name changes may express a person’s new sense of identity. A return to ethnic names on the part of Blacks, Jews, American Indians and Hispanics (‘Geraldo Rivera’ grew up as ‘Gerald Rivera’) clearly reflects a resurgent pride in ethnic identity.

7.2.1. Renaming.

Renaming in search of a new identity is possible and permissible. “When the name-bearer grows up, it is up to him or her to decide either to keep, discard or shorten the name” (Ngidi, 2012:136). For instance, “*Elizabeth Tshele*, the author of *We Need New Names* has relocated to America and renamed herself *NoViolet Bulawayo*” (Moji, 2015:5). According to Barnes & Pfukwa (2010:212) “to name the self is a declaration of independence from wider social control and it is a choice in identity”. According to Mabheba (2019/08/27), “the name *Muchayamatako* means an expert in beating buttocks, that is the two round fleshy parts of the human body that form the bottom”. The bearer changed his name to *Muchaya* (expert in beating) to erase the vulgar meaning of *matako* (buttocks). Since the name has a vulgar meaning, it does not sit well with the bearer. He then opted to change it for a neutral one to avoid embarrassment. Change of environment such as social, political and economic transformations have been cited as the leading proponents for renaming. The logic is to find relevance. It might be social relevance, political relevance or economic relevance.

Renaming depends on the severity of the given scar in continuing to use the name. Once a person discovers the degree of injury caused by a name, renaming is imminent. Gora & Manyarara (2015:37) notes that the person may carry an emotional scar, until perhaps he/she is able to select a name for him or herself, that is, to vigorously reject a given name. To rename is to look for new life. Because the process of renaming opens up new possibilities, new attributes, new values, and it also reshapes ideologies and creates new concepts of the self as well as redefining the

groups within which the self operates (Barnes & Pfukwa, 2010:209). This means that by renaming you are recreating yourself. In Akan, people with circumstantial names normally change them when they grow up (Agyekum, 2006:209). But even if a name can be changed, it cannot be erased from history because through the acceptance of the name a history is created, which remains eternal.

There are therefore unlimited variety of reasons that lead to renaming. Some are justified, others are not. Among Shona people, renaming is widespread. For example, unexplained recurrence of sickness may be one of the driving forces for seeking name change. Alford (1988:18,81-2,89) throws some light on this:

Name changes in response of sickness. In some societies, seriously ill persons will change their names in an attempt to shake their illness. Name changes may reflect and reinforce identities. By far the most protective name changes, however, are those made during sickness or at the death of a relative. Iban parents may change a child's name three or four times in a year if the child is sick, to put malicious spirit off the scent

People may also change their names for religious reasons. For instance, in the pre-Vatival Roman Catholic church it used to be mandatory to receive a new name upon being baptised in the church. Again, Alford noted that several prominent American blacks, upon conversion to Islam, assumed Arabic names (Alford, 1988:158). For example, the renowned boxing champion, Cassius Clay was renamed Muhammad Ali, Lew Alcindor was renamed Kareen Abdul Jabbar.

Even radical political conversions may be symbolised by new names, for example, Patty Hearst's transformation into Tanya, and Charles Manson who renamed all of his followers, are some of the notable examples (Alford 1988: 159), and some cults. Changes in sexual identity, too, may call for name changes. The Classical Musician, Walter Carlos, following a sex-change operation, is now known as Wendy Carlos. This leads to the observation that names are not fixed but subjective, and hence flexible for change.

But there are also cynical reasons why some people's names are changed. In some cases, 'superiors' renamed their subjects, especially white employers to their employees. Convenient names were given as a result of an action or appearance of the person and sometimes given purely at the whim of the employer. For example, *Butterfly*, *Art*, *Coke*, *Darky*, *Census* and many others. Dickens (1985:14) noted that

“convenient names like *Carwash*, *Paraffin* and *Sixpence* were chosen and given to employees simply because the whites could not pronounce Zulu names.” hence the name.

7.2.2. Nicknaming

Like renaming, nicknames are given for different reasons. Koopman (2002:12,27,51,53) explained that:

The term ‘nickname’ is derived from the older English from ‘an eke name’, where ‘eke’ name means ‘additional’, ‘added’. Nicknames of course, are not only personal to a particular individual (not to mention individual to a particular person), they are also ‘given’ names. Nicknames can be given by the mother to their babies, peers at school, work and so forth. They are not added on official name.

According to Molefe (cited in Koopman (2002:52), many nicknames are derived from praises, especially in relation to the Zulu nicknames. Although praise names generally, focus on the more positive attributes of an individual, they may also be biting, sarcastic, and even cruel. Ngidi (2012:134) observes that “nicknames are baby names or pet names which reflect specific aspects of identity referred to: personality traits (*Mahlomeka* – Mr Don’t think before – he – acts), physical appearance (*Mudemude* – Mr Tall one), habits or skills in particular activities (*Mshini ozoshintshayo* – Mr Automatic machine gun) for someone who is good in soccer”.

Nicknames indicate an even more intimate and still more personal relationship between the namer and the person named (Alford, 1988:165). Krige makes the point that “the nickname often stuck to the child more firmly than his real name” (cited in Dickens, 1985:23). Alford (1988:156-7) avers that:

Other people are so important that they may rename the person by creating and perpetuating a nickname. Creating and using a nickname is, in essence, an attempt to redefine a person, often in response to emergent characteristics. And the continued use or abandonment of one’s nickname will usually reflect the continuing or declining importance of these significant others in shaping one’s identity.

In some social situations, personal names are carefully avoided and may be replaced by nicknames. Alford (1988:166) observes that “the Taiwan Hokkiens commonly give depreciatory nicknames to boys, to avoid the attention of malicious ghosts, for

example, 'small snake', 'thin dog', 'idiot pig'" (Alford, 1988:65). Nicknames are common, especially in the world of sports, politics, movies, television and the military" (Alford, 1988:156).

7.2.3. Ritual (Name cleansing)

Renaming and nicknaming are not only solutions among Shona people. Since these people are notoriously religious, rituals are common where ceremonies are held for name cleansing. This usually happen to namesakes. For example, a certain lady by the name of *Theresa Penzura*, was named after her aunt, who was a herbalist and ritualist. Her life has been problematic all the way. She visited a traditionalist in a quest to avert the misfortunes. And she was told straightforwardly that her name was indeed a problem, the spirit of her deceased namesake wanted her to follow suit. The only solution was to accept and honour it through a name cleansing ritual, a condition she was not interested with because of her conviction to Christianity. Thus, a name is very instrumental during these cleansing ceremonies.

7.3. Recommendations

In this section, I wish to make some few recommendations relating to name giving, so as to help minimize the negative influence of some names. I wish to argue that positive naming is one of the best ways to avert problems associated with negative names. By positive naming I mean assigning names with positive meaning. If the society takes this direction, we will create a generation of people who are socially and psychologically healthy. This may assist in creating an environment which is less toxic but more productive and hence make the earth a safe haven for all its inhabitants. Positive and motivational names can improve the human condition.

From my research findings, most of the people affected by negative naming are women. Thus, positive names will lead to the protection of women. Since in many of our African societies, women are in majority, when they are in distress, the entire society is hurting.

I proposed that there must be a discipline or rather a subject in all our institutions of learning that teaches about naming practices. It is imperative to do so because naming affects people socially even psychologically. Hence the study of names is a privilege

route to acquire more knowledge about people. Thus, the research sparks conversation for broader debate on what it means to be a human person.

Names carry logical implications. De Pina-Cabral found that “the naming processes carry with them social implications concerning what a person is and how he or she should be placed in the world” (in Issah *et al.*, 2015:77). When naming, caution must be exercised. The reason for cautiousness as explained by Sengani (2015:8) is that “names are usually used to refer to children and provoke their response. In reality it is the elders and the children’s parents who are speaking to each other. They create hidden voices and identities around the name carriers who are blameless or innocent children”. Using names as a family war field is unacceptable. Name givers must resist and desist from abuse of names. Names must be free from all forms of negativity. They must respect the bearer by wishing him/her good luck. Naming should then be left to experts. These should be people who can use words to influence people positively. If people are correctly named, they adopt good behaviour for specific special purpose, which is destiny and thus corresponds with the values of humanity, and as a result respect to the named is guaranteed. Ideally, the name expert must be guided by principles of value system, because the relevant name is productive to the bearer. Thus, name-experts must use appropriate names. Those names should promote the well-being of people

Makoni *et al* (2007:437) believe that “naming is susceptible to change”. A belief shared by Alford (1988:89-90) noting that “names are more varied, fashionable and trendy for girls”. Fashionable names are advisable. Names must have an element of civilisation. New realisation of the damage caused by bad naming, suggest that good naming is the solution. Names must prioritise blessings, truth and hope. Good naming means we are dealing with the past for a better today and tomorrow. Giving a good name, the name giver is doing himself/herself a favour because they will be a good destiny for the named. The success of the named is not only profitable to himself/herself but it extends to the family, and sometimes to the country. So, a good name is productive, and it is an investment on itself.

On another front, negative names cause low self-esteem. Thus, they weaken the person’s confidence. Mutema & Njanji (2013:254) found that “the names that show animosity have a negative impact on the named such as embarrassment as well as

promoting low – self-esteem on the named”. A person without confidence is disabled. So, this disability is not natural but artificial, not accidental, but intentionally designed. This is because the name weakens the performance of the bearer.

Some people are unaware of the extraordinary works of names, they only understand the ordinary usage. As a matter of bringing understanding to the extraordinary works, teaching through awareness is imperative, so that some negative naming patterns must be arrested. Awareness in schools, communities and workplaces at local, national and international levels is strongly recommended if not prescribed. It is true that names cause problems to their bearers. Hence, the need for naming that is intended to educate against social problems, and not naming that create or postpone problems. And the simplest way is making the message spread and known through awareness, whether be it workshops, social media, TVs, Radios, literature or any other communication method, the message must be spread freely unhindered because it is central to human’s life.

From pre-colonial Africa to colonial and post-colonial Africa, naming has been the subject of discussion because in itself, it is a subject of power contestation due to its symbolic significance. And to that end, it must be revisited repeatedly. To be somewhat fair, colonisation has erased the Shona naming conception. Mushati (2013:70) stated that “this branch of onomastics provides an ideal platform for formerly colonised subjects, who had hitherto been erased from history, to engage in counter discourse that authorise their presence”. Channels avers that “the naming process became part of the effort to erase an identity and an ideology that had been built over 70 years of colonial rule, constructed upon the myth of invincibility of the colonial power” (cited in Barnes & Pfukwa, 2010:215).

The functions of names, whether personal, place or street are closely related and very important in distinguishing and reflecting identities of named entities. Since names can create a mindset, they can be used as a weapon of restructuring and reconstructing. “Place names in independence Zimbabwe were therefore supposed to transform this mindset of the black people to that of masters with control over their own destiny, for example, Rhodesia changed to Zimbabwe at independence in 1980” (Magudu *et al.*, 2014:74). What happened to the country must happen to the people. The country and the people are one. Chabata (2013:48) cemented the logic by a Shona idiom themed

“*nyika vanhu* (a country is people), the meaning of the name is that a country is defined or understood through the people who inhabit it”. As lauded by Kaunda’s theory of humanism, “one country one people one nation”. Possibly an extension to one Africa may be a necessary imperative, because Africans have identical problems but due to confusion and disunity, they have a fraternal solution, and it is not efficient and effective. Bringing this issue to reality, Magudu *et al* (2014:83) noted the change proposed by Chigwedere, saying they “were really concerned with deconstructing a mindset created by foreign names. He wanted to ensure that pupils were aware of the real heroes of the Zimbabwean history”. Ngidi (2012:97) is of the view that “there is a close relationship between the society and the language in which names are found”.

7.4. Protection of women

To win the problem, start by fixing the source of the problem. Bad naming is a postponement of the problem, in fact, a transference of the calamity from the name giver to the given. In most cases, bad naming has been attributed to the mistreatment of women in societies. Thus, to avert bad naming, first we need to avert the abuse of women especially pregnant women, married or not. Because evidence has shown that, in Zimbabwe for instance, bad naming is a result of difficulties encountered by women during pregnancy. The assumption is applicable to both wanted and unwanted pregnancies, but attributed to the state of mind of the parent(s) due to uncertainties they found themselves locked in. Gora & Manyarara (2015:37-8) found that,

Unintended pregnancies are more likely to be associated with abusive and probably non-consensual or socially sanctioned relationships, hence names like *Mistake* or *Murambiwa* (the rejected one). Unmarried pregnant girls are often rejected and ostracised by their families, friends and communities. Such pregnancies may sometimes be due to sexual assault, rape or even incest. The trauma of the conception as does the actual birth circumstances can cause negative naming of a baby by the victim.

This is because women play a critical role in childbearing. Whether pregnant or not, they must be loved, given extra care because they are fragile. This requirement is an important prerequisite for positive naming. Because it is that fragility that after delivering, it will give birth to bad names summarising the experiences encountered. This is because names, mostly comes from past or present experiences, but also, they might define the future in a child. The fact that they are defenceless, it makes sense that their only method to express themselves of their predicament is through naming

their children. It is their way of fighting, at the same time relieving their emotions. In that way, they feel that hearers will be able to identify their plight. This is convincingly enough to say that protection of women is equivalent to objecting negative naming. And it is not necessary to argue that their happiness will be expressed in good names. A promise of good destiny to the named, something equivalent to uniting the family and a prosperity to society.

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7.5. Challenges

However, in spite of the amount of effort made to effect positive naming, there are obstacles that makes positive naming a failed ambition. These challenges will make the recommendation difficult to attain. No African country has enacted naming laws. And what is interesting to note is that derogatory or protective names are very popular in Africa. Choice of name is a personal or remains a family issue. Since naming is at a personal or family level, the errors of naming might exist eternally, because one cannot be told the choice of name. "Parents can indeed saddle their children with "bad names" perhaps as an expression of the parents' freedom of speech" (Gora & Manyarara, 2015:36). And it is difficult for authorities to enact laws that regulate naming patterns and conceptions. Although rarely effected in some few Western countries, there is none in Africa. Gora & Manyarara (2015:38) stated that "this kind of concern is not taken cognisance of in Zimbabwean law". Moyo (2012:15) argues that "the state cannot control names in public life. It is within individual power to conceptualise and project their names according to how and what they think is best for them". "As the advent of human rights, particularly in South Africa, "the South African constitution affords people a right to bestow a personal name of their choice upon their children" (Ngubane & Thabethe, 2013:5). This lack of support from the government makes the issue complicated. An immediate solution is far-reaching. This is a victory for people who practices bad naming. When a person feels that instead of God, the derogatory name protects, there is totally nothing anyone can do to avert the decision. People name according to their interest, and interest cannot be delegated. But Mateos (2014:110) noted the effect of the system arguing that "the main consequence of the spread of unique and distinctive black naming practices is that such names reinforce existing processes of discrimination".

7.6. Conclusion

The sooner we avoid bad naming the better chances we create for good and effective destiny for the majority of our people. A broad understanding can tell that good naming has the better chances of beating poverty in our societies. Good naming in line with our traditional values has better chances of eliminating exclusion of the named, thereby guaranteeing him/her a safe place and making him/her an active member in society. And this works as a starting point in creating an impressive common understanding among various people in societies they belong. Thus, names must reflect a hopeful attitude and not act as professional agents for systematic mockery.

General conclusion

Names are important identification keys to all earthly objects, particularly humans. Among Africans particularly the Shona people, naming is educative and informative therefore it is a fundamental practice. Mushati (2013:87) points out that “an analysis of the names shows that this is a means of collating, imprinting, preserving and publicising specific value systems of the powerful group that controls the politico-economic spheres”. Names as discourse create voices that are dialogic or answer or respond to what has gone before or is taking place and at times react in anticipation of what is to come. Names indeed serve to describe individual traits and they index familiarity, kinship and group membership. This shows that giving of names is not done haphazardly but follows rules in every society. According to the evidence presented, it is conceivably undisputable to say that African conception of personal naming is an artistic enterprise. The creativeness is pure visual art. The art is depictive of African people’s philosophies. Since personal names are reflective of various ways of people’s lives, they are valuable source of information. Thus, Shona names are very important because they express the Shona people’s whole way of life. The respect for original identity and meaning, makes Shona names enjoy preference and popularity in Zimbabwe. To that conclusion, “names are serious business, as is witnessed by examples” (Dickens, 1985:26-7). However, irrespective of the effort provided on naming solutions, the Zimbabwe constitution seems to be the stumbling block as it does not specify embarrassing name as emotionally abusive. And this makes our efforts partially useless.

Ideologically, Western names are not appropriate for Africans. Since they are meaningless, they only serve the purpose of continuing the discourses of the West. Their inception was a method to conquer the powerless. Since African countries have achieved independence from the colonial powers, there has been frequent reactions against the use of names from colonial languages. With the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, and the birth of the new South Africa, Western names have increasingly been seen as badges of colonial domination and have been referred to by some writers as ‘slave names’ (Koopman, 2002:21,22-3) - a description equivalent to assault by insulting.

Most importantly, the research managed to show the beauty of the Shona conception of personal naming, specifically saluting its multiplicity of functions. The beauty is manifested in its fashionability approach. Its flexibility to change promotes relevance. The usage of fashionable names is a manifestation of the higher priority placed upon attractiveness for women than for men. While male names emphasize the uniformity and continuity of the male roles, female names may occasionally function as verbal jewellery, emphasizing attractiveness (Alford, 1988:155). In addition, names are important in addressing people's problems. Thus, names overlap identification purpose and become active communication tools. Of worthy to note is that names indicate happiness or sadness, depending on individuals, families or societies. They close or open people's wounds. The research affirms that since a name is an important aspect of human social life, without it, many social activities would not have easily been done or be possible. It is appropriate to conclude this dissertation with the words of Okere (1995) which summarise the significance of naming:

The privilege of name-giving is generally reserved to the parents and grandparents whom it gives an opportunity to express the importance of their lives or in general, to make a significant statement on their life experience, and to express deep-felt wishes or their future hopes and expectations for the child.

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